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Examining the Red Corps

an investigation into the adoption, revolution, and continued development of ballet in China

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Examining the Red *Corps*: An Investigation into the Adoption, Revolution, and Continued Development of ballet in China.

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ABSTRACT

In the mid-twentieth century in the People's Republic of China, classical ballet was consciously adopted and institutionalised by the state. The systematic adoption of the form was part of a nation building exercise which made use of the bodies of ballet dancers for state ideology. Ballet dancers in China are highly refined and skilled, and are constituted in relation to Maoist thinking which promoted the development of physical virtuosity as a path to developing national health and international status. Under Mao, the cultivation of the physical body made links between individual virtuosity, personal morality and the success of the state. As such, dancers became tools of the revolution.

These developments in dance reflected the social, ideological and political upheaval of the time, spread all over China, in one of the single largest efforts of this kind in the world's history. In a short period, the state investment in ballet saw substantial changes in which dance became a legitimate profession, new genres of dance were established, new ways of training the body initiated, and new repertoire created. Classical ballet was successfully reconceptualised from an 'alien' genre to an indigenous one. As such, this period of Chinese history provides an excellent site for examining the mechanisms by which ballet is both responsive to and generative in, the socio-cultural political environment. This project highlights not only the large systematic and institutional developments, but also the experiences of the individuals who make up these systems and the effects the developments had on the bodies and lives of the dancers themselves. Using the experiences of dancers in China, it reveals the complexity and nuance of the body engaged in a cultural and artistic practice which reflects and generates socio political production. The dancer herself, her body, much like the dance practice, is an interdisciplinary, transhistorical, transnational site ripe for exploration.

CONTENTS

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NOTES

Romanization: I have opted to use the Hanyu PinYin system for Chinese names and titles. Exceptions are made, however, in cases when another romanization is official or has greater currency, or in cases where material is quoted from another source.

Anonymisation: Following the ethics guidelines for conducting anthropological research I have routinely anonymised names and other details of participants. Names with inverted commas are pseudonyms to protect the identity of my interlocutors. Names without are the real names of interviewees of whom I have the express permission to quote without anonymisation. As such, there is no list of interviews undertaken in the appendices. A full list of interview participants, and audio data derived from the interviews is in the possession of the author, in cloud and physical storage, password protected, following the university's ethics guidelines.

Chapter Seven, "Not Another Don Quixote! Negotiating China's Position on the International Ballet Stage" will appear in altered form in the forthcoming Dodds, Sherril (Ed.) (2017) *Oxford Handbook to Dance and Competitions*, New York: Oxford University Press.

A version of Chapter Eight, "Contemporary Ballet in China" has been accepted for publication in the forthcoming Farrugia-Kreil, Kathrina & Nunes Jenson, Jill (Eds.) (2018) *Oxford Handbook to Contemporary Ballet*, New York: Oxford University Press.

INTRODUCTION

While ballet is traditionally understood as acultural, American anthropologist Joann Keali'inohomoku's seminal article *An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance* ([1970] republished 1980, 2001) illustrated how everything from the format and staging of performances, to the themes of ballets, the aesthetic of the technique as well as the aesthetic of the physicality of the dancers themselves, and the use of French terminology, serves to situate ballet well within a cultural discourse. Ballet is an ethnic dance form, and Western assumptions underpin the genre. Keali'inohomoku argued that "ballet is international in that it "belongs" to European countries plus groups of European descendants in the Americas. But when ballet appears in countries such as Japan or Korea it becomes a borrowed and alien form." (1970: 40). In a sense, this is true for ballet in China; ballet has been established in China for a less than century, but following Chairman Mao's policy of 'critically assimilating' the legacies of art and literature, and the breakdown of the politically fragile relationship between Moscow and Beijing in 1960s, it was announced that ballet along as with all arts in China, would be officially 'reformed'. The aim was to create a genre dealing with "socially relevant themes", and as such, various "propaganda ballets" were staged (Glasstone, 2007: 51). Therefore ballet, both the technique itself and the choreography performed in China, has been responsive to its sociocultural environment, consciously moulded to fit its new situation, creating a new field of practice.

The body is both constitutive and representative of ideology, as well as a generative site of cultural practice in society. The body's shaping by society is illustrated through embodied everyday practices, and is simultaneously mediated by wider historical - cultural traditions. It is also generative of culture through practice. The bodies of ballet dancers in China are highly refined and skilled and are constituted in relation to the adoption of ballet following Maoist thinking which valorised the development of physical virtuosity as a path to developing national health and international status, as well as linking it to individual personal morality under socialism.

The governmental recognition of the power of dance to be used for state ideology meant that dancers were charged with using their bodies to both promote physical virtuosity as a metaphor for a strong, healthy and moral society, but also to depict a new world, one

according to official Chinese Communist Party (CCP) discourse that was in the progress of being established. The bodies of ballet dancers therefore, offer concrete objects through which to examine ideology and revolution, as well as agents who can speak of individual experience, identity, and the embodiment of social life, labour and politics. They offer a uniquely sophisticated example of the manipulation and mediation of the individual bodies by the state and other institutions, and the ways in which bodies are generative of culture.

In this dissertation, I use the balletic body as a site of cultural-historical investigation. I examine ballet in the People's Republic of China and the mechanisms by which ballet has evolved and continues to develop in this specific socio-cultural political environment. I explore the lives and experiences of ballet dancers since the beginning of the conscious adoption of ballet in China to the present day. This period of nearly sixty-five years is characterised by the formation of dance as legitimate profession, the successful reconception of classical ballet from an 'alien' genre to an indigenous one, as well as innovation and creativity in the form. The period examined is also one that is shaped by substantial socio-political upheaval. Although ballet existed in China in small pockets, largely amongst white immigrants to the country, the systematic and institutional adoption of the form in 1954, followed only five years after the founding of the People's Republic of China. The conscious adoption of the form was part of a nation building exercise in which dance was generously supported and legitimised by the state, new genres of dance were established, new ways of training the body initiated, and new repertoire created. These systematic developments in dance which reflected the social, ideological and political upheaval of the time, spread all over China, in one of the single largest efforts of this kind in the world's history. I endeavour to highlight not only the large systematic and institutional developments, but also the experiences of the individuals who make up these systems and the effects the developments had on the bodies and lives of the dancers themselves.

Drawing parameters to specifically define any field of artistic endeavour is incredibly complex. Ballet is taught and performed in a multitude of diverse ways throughout the world. Although an ontological discussion examining what constitutes and defines ballet is outside the scope of this research, I would broadly suggest that it is generally accepted that ballet is an institution based upon a specific vocabulary of movement, performed with

reference to an established aesthetic. Ballet is recognised, defined and redefined by those who form 'communities of practice'; (Lave & Wenger, 1991) engaging in the processes of collective learning in ballet as a shared domain of human endeavour. In modern ethnography, there are concerns about anthropology's role in the maintenance of Western hegemony. Traditionally anthropological writings have constructed or perpetuated myths about the 'Other', indeed the approach cannot avoid constructing the Other. Thus, it has been recognised that ethnography is "caught up with the invention, not the representation, of cultures" (Clifford, 1986: 2). As such modern anthropologists are obligated to find ways of rendering culture which reflect realities as "multisubjective, power-laden and incongruent" (ibid). Moreover, the dynamic between the researcher and the participants is not outside of the power-laden reality that Clifford identifies. As such, I made a conscious decision not to 'fix' or define a notion of ballet. As the researcher is very often privileged in ethnographic situations, I did not want to assert my own understanding of what ballet is or is not onto my participants. I endeavoured to approach the concept and resulting terminology less encumbered with Western assumptions of the form that I might be when discussing the genre in the West. In part, this fluid notion of ballet is central to one of the primary aims of the project: to explore how ballet is shaped by and shapes sociocultural context. To 'fix' the central concept from the outset would prevent me from identifying the malleable, responsive, and generative nature of the form. Furthermore, I aim to describe the way in which ballet has been indigenized in China from its beginning as an import from the Soviet Union. Such indigenizing processes would not be deemed possible if ballet is determined as one particular technique, style, training method, aesthetic found in a specific geographical location and historical moment. Instead, I intended to use the term as my participants used it, working to understand emic descriptions of the form, and acknowledging, perhaps even highlighting, that this is not a stable construction.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) Foucault defines 'archive' as the collection of material traces which remain following a particular historical period and culture. He describes the archive in terms of the conditions of the possibility of its construction, thus it is not a static collection of 'objects', instead a set of relations, "the general system of the formation and transformation of statements" (129 – 130). The bodies of dancers in China are archival in the sense that they are always in the process of being created, possessing

remarkable skill and ability, they evolved as a fluid manifestation of a set of relations, between practice, ideology, nationalism, and trans-nationalism. They are also in dialogical relationships with the various iterations of the projects of communism all over the world, with the politics and artistic legacies of the West and with Imperial China. The virtuosic bodies themselves are also symbolic. They are presented to be read by the positioning of the observer. They are representative of strength, morality, equality, vigour, cultural and artistic sensitivity and/or oppression, denial, discipline, pain and torture. This variable reading demonstrates that the historical *a priori* constituted by discourse is not an *a priori* in the more formal philosophical sense. Instead knowledge claims are partial, not universal, do not remain stable, and are difficult to recognise because the relations operate at the level of existence and practice (Foucault, 1972: 127). In exploring the balletic body, this project seeks not to present one reading at the expense of another, but rather explore the ways in which these different systems and relations are expressed and manifest in the representation of body in practice, without negating the subjectivity and experience of the dancer herself. It also highlights how these divergent interpretations can coincide and, in some instances, be mutually dependent. Moreover, it endeavours to examine the realisation of the creative and artistic potential of the dancer's body and of institutions, suggesting that ballet in China makes unique contribution in many areas to ballet as a transnational practice.

The thesis is divided into three parts: the first part deals with the ways in which the body as a site of experience and representation has been theorised in academia, and in various religious and socio-cultural traditions in China. This first part, comprised of chapters one and two, lays the theoretical foundations for discussion of the body which lie at the heart of the project. Chapter one outlines the different conceptions of the body as proposed by the 'body project' in Western academia. It continues to explore the application of some of these ideas to the bodies of ballet dancers and highlights why social theory can aid our understanding of dance and the balletic body specifically, as a set of bodily practices created through social mediations. In exploring ballet as an initially Western institution and locating the dancers and balletic bodies that inhabit that world in a broader social context, I aim to investigate the ways in which "specific social worlds invest, shape and deploy human bodies" (Wacquant, 1995: 65) and how, in turn, these bodies help shape the social world.

Chapter two investigates elements of Chinese philosophy, culture and history which have had significant impact on the ways in which the body has been thought about and constructed. Observing that the balletic body in China sits at the intersection of traditional modes of thinking about the body, alongside ideas from New China, with notions about the body from the West which are embedded in the practice of ballet, it highlights the body as a location for debate centred on China, which surveys the changing nature of ideology, power, social structures and cultural systems from ancient times to the inception of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949.

Part two of the dissertation documents the introduction of ballet to China in three chapters which each detail a different period of recent Chinese history: chapter three, the early twentieth century; chapter four, the Maoist revolutionary period; and chapter five, the post-Mao era. Another aim of the dissertation is to contribute to the existing English language scholarship documenting the introduction and evolution of ballet to China. While there are a few existing English language studies which detail parts of these periods, there is no comprehensive study which documents these three periods from the introduction of ballet in China to the Reform and Open era. Most existing scholarship offers discussion which is limited to a particular time period or the contributions of a specific individual. While the overview detailed in part two of this dissertation is far from exhaustive, a fuller history could surely be the single focus of an entire manuscript, it allows for key developments in the form to be plotted. Understanding how ballet emerged in social, historical and political context is fundamental to understanding the type of bodies, training methods, institutional procedures, and creative and artistic processes which have emerged in China. While all three periods reflect this evolution, the revolutionary period is documented in greater detail as it was essential to the motivation to consciously adopt ballet, and was the period which successfully institutionalised and indigenized ballet. It also is the era which is perhaps most unique to its Chinese iteration.

The third part explores ballet as a transnational practice in the modern era. Chapter six discusses the processes by which dancers are made today. It is an ethnography of elite ballet training which highlights how the body of the dancer is cultivated using various strategies in order to illuminate the different properties and characteristics of the dancer's

bodily experiences in relation to the social world in which they operate. This project makes use of some of the aspects of both the theories of Foucault and Bourdieu to acknowledge the value found in the field of the characteristics of bodily virtuosity, and to emphasise the multifarious disciplinary techniques which are in operation in ballet training institutions. Chapter seven and eight respectively, present two discrete case studies which illuminate the place of the Chinese dancer in ballet as a global practice. In chapter seven, this is the world of the ballet competition. This chapter problematises the nature of formal competitions in an artistic practice, and indicates both the importance of competitions for individuals and the broader institution of ballet in China, in addition to suggesting why a focus on competition might be problematic. Chapter eight explores contemporary ballet in China. It investigates how the model works made during the revolutionary period have facilitated the development of a flourishing style of new Chinese ballets. Drawing on an analysis of *Eight Heroines* (2015, [八女投江]), I argue that ballet's contemporaneity in China might not be considered merely idiomatic, but instead the successful indigenization of ballet with local and hybrid features unique to China promotes a realisation of modernity which is exclusively Chinese and cosmopolitan by its very divergence from contemporary ballet as it is characterised in the West.

As is clear from the summary description, this project is ambitious in its temporal and disciplinary scope. Although broadly situated with in anthropology, and using ethnographic methods, the project also adopts epistemologies and methodologies from sociology, history and philosophy. This interdisciplinary approach acknowledges that research in the humanities is in fact a web of overlapping, rather than discrete perspectives, and that interdisciplinarity might be appropriate to reflect the complexity of social life. Furthermore, as dance can be more accurately described as a topic or subject of enquiry rather than a discipline in its own right, and as each chapter of the thesis poses different, if related, questions, a 'cookie cutter' approach is not desirable. Each subject should be explored using the approach most suitable to the topic.

This research is the outcome of fieldwork conducted in China over a five-year period between 2012 and 2017. During this period, I visited China a total of five times spending between three and six months in China each visit. I observed classes, rehearsals,

examinations, and performances at elite ballet institutions over a sustained period. This was primarily in two first-tier Chinese cities; Beijing (where I lived for five months in 2015, and visited for shorter spans over the five year period) and Shanghai, which is where the most prestigious schools are situated. Between March and September 2016 for a six-month period, I was an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Fellow in Shanghai at the Shanghai Theatre Academy (STA), one of China's most prestigious and competitive arts training conservatoires with a specialised ballet major. I was scholar-in-residence at the university and allowed full access to participate in daily life at STA, and the associated Shanghai Dance Secondary School (SDS), to watch classes, rehearsals and performances, as well as interview students, teachers and other members of the faculty. I followed closely a group of final year male students at STA, second year female students at STA, and a group of younger students in their third year of training at SDS. I attended all the ballet classes of these groups over a two-month period and watched them prepare for and perform their formal examinations. I also observed rehearsals for performances, and other supplementary classes such as pointe work, pas de deux, repertoire and Chinese classical dance (*zhongguo gudianwu* [中国古典舞]). I grew to know these cohorts well, was able to chart their progression throughout the semester. I often socialised with the class teachers and students. While in Shanghai I was also fortunate to be able to observe the Shanghai Ballet in class, rehearsal and performance. Furthermore, this research draws on observations at the Beijing Dance Academy (BDA), and the affiliated secondary school numerous times during this period. BDA is China's most prestigious conservatory for dance training and research. In 2015, during my fieldwork in Beijing, I was invited to attend the Beijing International Ballet and Choreography Competition (IBCC). I was granted press access to watch the entire competition and gala performances and was allowed backstage to interview the competitors. I attended every stage of the competition over twelve days, and also participated in an academic conference which occurred during the event. In Beijing I was also able to observe the National Ballet of China in class, rehearsal and performance. During this period, I also travelled outside of these centres to other cities in China. I observed training in Guangzhou, Tianjin, Hebei, Chengdu, Liaoning and Xi'an provinces.

During my periods of fieldwork in China I conducted approximately seventy interviews with current and former dancers, teachers, choreographers, administrators and company

directors. I also conducted a further fifteen interviews with dancers who had trained in China but had moved abroad to pursue professional careers in ballet companies in Europe or the Unites States of America. In many instances, these dancers were more clearly able to articulate the distinctiveness of their formative experiences in China. I also took part in academic conferences at the Shanghai Theatre Academy, Shanghai Culture Square, the Beijing International Ballet and Choreography Competition, and was an invited to present my research at Shanghai Theatre Academy, East China Normal University and Tongji University in Shanghai. Other research data was collected from the archives at the headquarters of the National Ballet of China in Beijing, the Beijing Dance Academy, Liaoning Ballet, and the Dance Research Institute at the Chinese National Academy of Arts, as well as from the personal collections of my participants both in China and in the UK. I also used the archives of the Royal Ballet and Rambert Dance Company in London. Film footage of the model works were analysed from commercially available DVD recordings and from the live performances observed in China. Additional film materials, such as DVDs of the ballet syllabus of the Beijing Dance Academy, and recordings of international dance competitions held in China over several years were commercially available in Beijing at the bookshop of the Beijing Dance Academy. The analysis of Liaoning Ballet's *Eight Heroines*, was made possible by the company generously providing a copy of a recording of the ballet.

While I am most definitely an 'outsider' conducting fieldwork in China, when I began this project my Mandarin language skills were very limited, and even five years later, following much arduous language study, I still struggle; however, I am an 'insider' to ballet. I trained in ballet and later contemporary dance and performed professionally as a ballet and contemporary dancer for many years until injuries made my performing career untenable. I am also an 'insider' to dance institutions. Following my abrupt retirement from professional performing, I was offered a job at Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance, where I continue to work part time. I have also worked at Central School of Ballet in London and am now a lecturer in the Dance Department at the University of Roehampton where I teach both ballet classes in the studio and lecture in theoretical studies of dance more generally. Ballet is a particularly specialised social world. There are few who combine comprehensive and nuanced knowledge of the form, with the tools needed to be able to analyse how it functions and is structured effectively. While in China I also maintained my practice as a

dancer and teacher. I took part in open level adult classes in Beijing, and in Shanghai was invited to join a private weekly class run by Shanghai Ballet Principal dancer, Zhang Yao [张尧]. On several occasions I taught this class when Zhang was on tour, and we co-taught a full day workshop based on Shanghai Ballet's performance of *The White Haired Girl* (1965) at the Shanghai Culture Square. I think my familiarity with the social and bodily experiences of being dancer, with the training methods and sacrifices necessary, allowed me to build strong relationships with my interlocutors.

During my time in the field, I was also heavily involved in the swing dance communities in Shanghai and Beijing. While not directly related to my research, being engaged in a dance practice, in social dancing, teaching, performing and competing gave me access to a great many local Chinese dancers with whom I built friendships. This allowed me access to their networks of friends and acquaintances which occasionally offered a connection which was relevant for my research. For example, I was dancing with a fellow lindy hopper at a local dance in Shanghai one evening, when my dance partner told me that his mother had been in the original cast of the revolutionary ballet *The White Haired Girl*. I was thrilled, and he set up an interview with her. In turn, she connected me to many of her contemporaries who had also danced in the original production. This dance practice also provided a group of people who were willing to help when I needed practical advice or help with Chinese language.

Anthropological research has, for centuries, been characterised by its multilinguality. Although many methods are adopted in the study of culture, anthropology traditionally employs long-term, direct observation and participation, "deep immersion" (Keesing, 1976:9) in lives of the members of the community involved in the research. In practice, this very often requires learning the local language of the participants. This not only allows the researcher greater insight into the daily lives of the people, it allows them to build and share meaningful relationships, and engage with the field site in a richer manner. This is very true for this specific project. Even though I am fluent in the vocabulary of classical ballet, when I began this research, I had no understanding of Mandarin Chinese at all, and embarked on my study in earnest. In addition to research trips, I have also undertaken three separate

trips to study Mandarin Chinese at universities in China and Taiwan, the most recently in 2018 as a scholarship recipient for three months intensive study at National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU). However, Chinese is not an easy language for a native English speaker to master, and a full-time job meant that practically it was hard to make substantial progress during the academic semesters. Whilst in London I went to weekly Chinese lessons at a private language school and had two hourly conversation classes via the internet with one of my teachers in Beijing. While this was better than nothing, not being immersed in the language I would struggle to maintain what I had learnt in my more intensive courses.

While I am proficient to interact in most situations in daily life, sociologist Karen O'Reilly indicates that language learning for ethnographic work requires much more, "it may not be simply a matter of learning to communicate in another language, but of identifying subtle differences in dialect, understanding colloquialisms, acquiring slang terminology, and learning when and how to use a polite and casual tone" (2012: 95). These commonplace features of language are necessary for the researcher to understand social interactions fully, as well as the meanings attached to practices performed by the participants in the field. In many situations, my linguistic capabilities were more than adequate. Ballet is a highly physical practice which requires much more bodily than verbal dexterity. My fluency in reading ballet and the processes involved in training were often more important than my language abilities. Watching daily classes, comprehending instructions and corrections by the teacher, and discussions in class rarely proved too much of a challenge. Neither did speaking informally to students and other staff members between classes or during breaks. However, in formal interviews, when my interlocutors had greater opportunity to speak at length and in depth about complex subjects, I required outside help. Furthermore, my ability to read is at an intermediate level and my (hand)written[1] Chinese poorer still. This meant that it was necessary to use interpreters and translators to aid in conducting the research in some instances.

1 Handwriting Chinese characters from memory and typing Chinese character in text messages or on a computer are two distinct skills with the latter being significantly easier for most learners of Chinese than the former. In hand written Chinese, the author must remember the strokes of thousands of very complex Chinese characters, however, in typing, the author is only required to know the PinYin romanization of the word and to be able to recognise the correct character (as homophones have the same PinYin but are written differently) using computerised applications. Therefore, it is entirely possible to be able to type in Chinese quite proficiently and struggle to write very basic sentences by hand.

Anthropologist Elizabeth Tonkin notes that, “Anthropologists are normally expected to ‘learn the language’, and while most try to do so, many of us feel we fail. Since this means failure to measure up to a publicly required occupations definition, anthropologists have often taken refuge in silence.” (Tonkin, 1984: 178). Norwegian anthropologist Axel Borchgrevink shared these concerns drawing attention to a “silence” about issues of “language competence” and the use of interpreters and translation in fieldwork, which he suggests contributes to a persistent “fieldwork mystique” (2003: 95 – 96). Brochgrevink argued that acknowledging insufficient language skills on the part of the researcher serves to potentially undermine their credibility. These things, Brochgrevink suggests, are inherent to the “fieldwork mystique” which places such emphasis on fieldwork as a necessary precondition for the very existence of anthropology, that it places this epistemology outside the scope of serious critique. He also notes that many eminent researchers important to the development of Anthropology such as E.E. Evan-Pritchard and Margaret Mead, had little command of the language of their participants. Although Mead claimed that she could conduct research with “twenty or thirty locutions at the most” (Mead, 1939: 197 in Brochgrevink, 2003: 100), most anthropologists would argue that a fluency in a language offers the potential to reveal most to the researcher.

On this point, in *Ethnographic Research: A Guide to General Conduct* (1984) Elizabeth Tonkin offers a reasonable approach concluding that as few researchers are able to do more than a year in the field,

> it is simply not possible for most people to do linguistically sensitive ethnography . . . in this time if they have to start from scratch linguistically too. It would be better to recognize that many kinds of inquiry can be undertaken through a lingua franca or with an interpreter – i.e. to recognize what actually often happens nowadays – while insisting that this work should be accompanied by as much informal language learning as possible . . . These are not ideal aims, but they are realistic ones (Tonkin, 1984: 185).

In reflecting on my less-than-fluent Mandarin, I realise that this perceived weakness in my project has forced me to be more critical and reflexive that I might have been if language were not an issue. I have had to justify methodological choices, and cross check my interpretation of situations and data. It has also highlighted some other issues which are often hidden in the “fieldwork mystique”; the way researchers consider data which is

generated from interviews using multiple methods bilingually, and how I situate the data created within the thesis.

In the course of this project I conducted interviews using three basic approaches. Firstly, I conducted interviews in Mandarin using an interpreter. In this case I asked the question in English, the interpreter would ask the participant in Mandarin, who would respond in Mandarin and the interpreter would explain the answer to me in English. In this instance, I would discuss the project, my aims and the types of questions and vocabulary with the interpreter before the interview. I conducted this type of interview more often in the first two years of fieldwork, when my Chinese language ability was fairly weak. In the second method, my participant was able to speak English to greater or lesser extents. On some occasions, when the participant had a good grasp of English, I went alone to the interview, I asked questions in English and the participant responded in English. At times we switched to Mandarin for phrases or ideas which were not readily translated, or felt clumsy or awkward in English. On a few occasions, where a participant could not express herself on a particular topic clearly enough, I asked that she respond in Mandarin and I later translated the section myself or with the help of a translator. The third method was something I practised more as my Mandarin became more proficient: a hybrid Chinese-English model. In cases where my participant spoke some English, we were able to conduct the interviews bi-lingually switching between languages as necessary. If there was something that remained unclear, I would ask that the participant respond in Mandarin and I would translate from the recording for the interview at a later date.

Each method has its own strengths and weaknesses and presents challenges for how I should deal with the data generated through interviews. In any research, as noted above, there is a difference in power between the researcher and the participants in the research. This power shifts as the research unfolds. In anthropology, a discipline tarred by its historical association to imperialism and colonialism, many modern researchers, myself included, would like to frame their projects not as the researcher being all knowledgeable, examining the objects of study as if they are a different breed, one essentially less educated and civilised, but instead, assuming the researcher is to a greater or lesser extent naïve, working with participants to explore and uncover features of their lives in which they are expert. This

is particularly true in this project when I am asking people to speak about their personal histories and embodied lives. They are expert. They are best placed to tell their own stories. Therefore, in presenting the data gleaned in interviews, it would seem advantageous to allow the voice of the participant to be present. To, as closely as possible, quote the participant exactly in the resulting dissertation. However, I am cautious that some modes of presenting the data generated from bilingual interviews privilege the researcher. When surrounded in prose written by a native English speaker, worse still, in verbose academic language, the voice of the participant speaking in non-native English cannot help but sound naïve by comparison. This disparity only serves to heighten the power imbalance between the researcher and the participants in the study. To try to mitigate this issue, but still allow the voices of the participants to be present, I have quoted the participants directly when appropriate. In some instances, I 'tidied up' the language uttered in the original interview a little to remove hesitation, repetition or erroneous use of language. This is far from a perfect system, however I hope it negotiates some of the issues raised above, and strives towards acting ethically as a researcher.

In anthropological and other research, anonymity is widely accepted as necessary for projects with human participation, especially for members of 'vulnerable' groups. The Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA) *Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice* (2011) state that researchers have responsibilities towards their participants including the "Rights to confidentiality and anonymity: informants and other research participants should have the right to remain anonymous and to have their rights to privacy and confidentiality respected." (ASA Guidelines, 2011 [online]). This professional guideline, in addition to the university's own ethical guideline which states that "anonymity for participants is usually the default position" (University of Roehampton, Ethics Guideline, 2019 [online]) meant that I routinely anonymised participant's identifying data unless I had been granted specific consent to use their real names.

In many cases, it was clear that anonymising participants was essential when discussing sensitive or incriminating data. Many aspects of this research interrogated complex political situations both in terms of large scale, national, even international politics, but also the smaller scale, localised politics inherent in specific social fields. In some cases, expressing

personal opinions or recalling lived experience could have serious consequences for the individuals involved. In some instances, during the process of conducting an interview, participants wanted to confirm that anything potentially incriminating they said would be anonymised. There were also instances of participants speaking to me 'off the record', and as such, these discussions are not included in this research. It would be unethical to put participants in positions of risk as a consequence of engaging in my research. I am very grateful to my participants for being willing to discuss these sensitive topics, and accept that often they were prepared to do so because they had trust that I would protect their right to anonymity.

However, uncritical acceptance of anonymity might generate concerns about representation, voice and authorship. This research is only made possible thanks to the people who were willing participants. They are the foundation to my claim to knowledge – and an important part of a PhD project is a claim to the generation of new knowledge – but they are also the individuals to whom I owe the opportunity to respond: to contribute to and question the assertions I have made based on their lives and experiences. If the data is completely anonymised, it might be difficult for those people to identify themselves in the research and as such, I deny them this important opportunity.

Moreover, in cases where data has been anonymised, there is little to verify the veracity of the claims made by the research. In this project, some strategies have been put in place to help negotiate these issues. Firstly, there are some participants who explicitly consented to their real names and other identifying features being used in the research. Some of these are high profile individuals who had previously recounted similar experiences in interviews with the press or in self-authored writing. Thus, my research would not fuel the risk these individuals were taking in discussing their experiences. The data from these interviews are of course verifiable with the participants themselves. More often than not, the accounts of anonymised participants were very similar to these identifiable interlocutors. In this way the claims of these individuals are used to substantiate the anonymised claims. Furthermore, in places I was able to find published accounts of the same or similar experiences, I was able to interweave published accounts with accounts from my interviews and observations. I also

did this when the published account was more eloquent or informative than the data I had collected.

Secondly, a great number of participants recalled experiences which were strikingly similar to one another, but also to things I had personally observed during my fieldwork. In this way, multiple anonymised accounts alongside my own observations feature in this research to strengthen the evidence for the claims made.

Lastly, it is important to find a balance between honouring commitments of confidentiality made to participants, whilst maintaining the usefulness of the data. If claims made by anonymised participants are no longer considered useful to the research, then entire projects would not be viable. In investigating social science methodologies, Denise Thompson et al (2005) suggests a reliance on inter-researcher trust, suggesting that other researchers are trusted to behave ethically both towards their participants, and to the commitments they have made to their disciplines and fellow researchers.

While this project is broad in its temporal span and ambitious in its disciplinary and methodological scope, the thread which weaves it together is that of a single individual, the ballet dancer in China and the ways in which her body is cultivated, manipulated, representative, personal and symbolic through culture. Using the experiences of dancers in China, it reveals the complexity and nuance of the body engaged in a cultural and artistic practice which reflects and generates socio political production. The dancer herself, her body, much like the dance practice, is an interdisciplinary, transhistorical, transnational site ripe for exploration.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE: The Body

Central to this project is an analysis of the manipulation of the bodies of ballet dancers and their embodied experiences of the practice of the form in China. This chapter will lay the theoretical groundwork from which to reveal the ways in which the body has been constructed, invested and deployed in ballet. An analysis of the specific manifestation of this in its Chinese location follows in parts two and three of the thesis. The thinking identified in part one will be drawn upon to expose the epistemologies which underpin our consideration of the body in the social world both in the Global North and in China. This chapter will describe some theories in the 'body project' which have developed in academia in the West and argue how they might be useful when utilised in studies of ballet, and in the case of ballet in China specifically.

In contrast to sociology, the body has been a primary concern in anthropology since the 19th century. While this project adopts ethnographic methodology from anthropology, it aims to discuss the relocation of a Western art form outside the Global North. Ballet is underpinned by the aesthetics of and knowledge about the body from its foundation and development in Western Europe and America. Thus in order to illuminate how the social world has constructed and mediated ballet bodies, one must turn to literature on the body project found in Western scholarship situated, for the most part, within sociology and philosophy.

Sociologist Bryan Turner (1991: 1) notes the early prominence of the body in anthropology highlighting several reasons that the body is centrally important to the discipline. Turner suggests that anthropology and its colonial mission, had at its core, a preoccupation with ontological questions about what it is to be human. An acute focus on the body as a site of universality was essential to engage with this problem, to understand difference and diversity, as well as offering a solution to the problem of social relativism. Turner (ibid: 5) also emphasises anthropology's concern with the relationship between culture and nature as a reason for the focus on the body. In anthropology the body is an important and overt surface upon which social status, religious affiliation, social group allegiance, family group and positioning, age and gender identities amongst others can be easily displayed. It is also

the site of social practice such as rituals and rites of passage particularly central to pre-industrial groups studied at the outset of the discipline. Thus, the body for anthropologists, both in terms of its symbolic and representational function, and its materiality in practice, was difficult to ignore.

By contrast, Turner argues that until recently, classical sociology "has been fundamentally a historical enquiry into the conditions for social change in social systems: it never successfully posed the issue of the human body as a historical issue" (ibid: 8).

Embodiment is obviously central to all human experience; our capacities as humans are themselves embodied - we think, feel, interact and experience through our bodies. Similarly, for as long as we have had/been bodies, the body has been a site of symbolism and representation; however, the awareness of what Turner termed the 'somatic society' describing how "the body in modern social systems has become the principle field of political and cultural activity" (Turner, 1992a, 12: 162) is a relatively recent phenomenon. The rise of 'body project' (Shilling, 1993) in academia in the 1980s explores the relationship between the body and society. Given this apparent interest in the body as a means of representation, expression and individual articulation, it strikes as unusual that, for the most part, social and cultural theorists have often neglected to address dance, a form which uses the body as its primary means of expression, representation and communication. Dance is the paradigmatic case of embodiment, and yet receives little attention. In a sociological study of ballet dancers, Steven Wainwright describes classical ballet as "a body project – a project whose grand aim is the production of 'the body as art'" (Wainwright, 2004: 100 [unpublished PhD thesis]). Therefore, while the body is fundamental to dance, and dance studies; a number of dance scholars (particularly Helen Thomas, 2003, 2008 (with J Ahmed), 2013) have highlighted how an awareness of how dance and dancing can contribute to social and cultural analyses of the body.

Although scholars (Thomas, 1995; Aalten, 1997; Turner and Wainwright, 2003; Khudaverdian, 2006 [unpublished PhD thesis]; Whiteside and Kelly, 2015) have long highlighted a dearth of sociological analyse of dance and ballet specifically; in recent years there has been a growing interest in the adoption of some theoretical conceptualisation of

the body in studies of dance. In many cases, scholars writing about dance have utilised the concepts of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. These scholars acknowledge that more recent sociologists have been more sensitive to the fact that classifications in the social world are interwoven with the ways in which the body is presented in social space. Bourdieu made this explicit in his work when he argued that

> Taste, a class culture turned into nature, that is, embodied, helps to shape the class body. It follows that the body is the most indisputable materialization of the class taste (Bourdieu, 1974: 190)

By introducing the theories of Foucault and Bourdieu I wish to illuminate how they can be used to aid our understanding the relationship between the body in ballet and the social world the dancer inhabits. I begin outlining three broad approaches to conceptualising the body which have been identified in the scholarship in the field. Moving forward, I briefly summarise the social theories outlined by Michel Foucault, Erving Goffman, and Pierre Bourdieu as they pertain to analyses of the body. I also endeavour to explore how these theories might be usefully applied to ballet both as an institution and practice, and also to the bodies of individual dancers in the field. It highlights limitations in the existing scholarship to the body in dance and lays a foundation for the specific analysis of the dancer's body in China which follows in the rest of the dissertation. I explore this in its many manifestations in chapter four, in a discussion of the dancing body as an ideological tool used during the revolutionary period, and in chapter six using the work of Foucault when discussing the strategies used to train bodies in the production of classical dancers. I return to the symbolic potential of the dancer's body using theory proposed by Bourdieu in chapter seven in an examination of the value of international competitions to ballet as a transnational practice.

These theories can be beneficial to studies of dance and dancers because they can aid our understanding of dance and the balletic body specifically, as a set of bodily practices created through social mediations. In exploring ballet as an institution and locating the dancers and balletic bodies that inhabit that world in a broader social context, we can begin to understand how "specific social worlds invest, shape and deploy human bodies" (Wacquant, 1995: 65) and how, in turn, these bodies shape the social world.

1.1 The Body Project

Since the 1980s there has been some interest from academics emanating from the social sciences and humanities in exploring dance. However, there is still relatively little in relation to ballet although this has grown in recent years. Ballet is a particularly specialised social world. There are few who combine a comprehensive and nuanced knowledge of the form with the tools needed to be able to analyse how it functions and structures effectively. This explains the dearth of empirical research in the sociology of Western theatre dance (Thomas, 1995). It is also notoriously difficult to examine the body and its relationship to dance without losing the materiality of the flesh, 'disembodying it' in theory and content analysis, or creating a bias towards reading dance as text. Nevertheless, social theory can aid our understanding of dance and the balletic body specifically, as a set of bodily practices governed by social mediations.

In order to comprehend how the body in ballet can be investigated, it is important to understand the literature on 'the body project' and the different traditional philosophical perspectives to research on the body present in humanities scholarship more generally. This chapter is indebted to the scholarship of sociologists Chris Shilling, Bryan Turner and Mike Featherstone who have pioneered the work on the body project as it has been discussed in the sociological literature. The body remains a site of philosophical debate and contested conceptualisation, with three major approaches which have been identified (Shilling, 1993): naturalist, social constructionist, and phenomenological.

In brief, the naturalist perspective is situated within the natural sciences, and argues that the objects of study and the methodologies used to study them belong to the natural world. Therefore not only does the scientific model reveal the natural world to us, it also offers the tools to investigate it. Naturalism is simultaneously an ontological and epistemological doctrine. The naturalist position reduces the body to a pre-social, biological entity in the world. Features of the body, human behaviour, social institutions and social inequalities were thought explicable in terms of a 'natural' biological basis. Individual, group, cultural and social differences, capabilities and constraints, on micro and macro scales, are biologically determined and (importantly) not socially constructed. Inequalities in wealth,

legal and political power are legitimate, unchanging and irreversible by the determining power of the evolved biological body. Following this, gender inequalities result from women's 'weaker', more 'unstable' and 'emotional' bodies. This perspective lends itself to the thinking that each constituent part of the body and its interactions, serves a function as a cog in the 'body-as-machine' philosophy (see Miller, 1978; Porter & Dunhill, 1989). In this theory each element of the body is organic and has a natural evolutionary advantage. The 'body-as-machine' ideology has offered a foundation for the medicalisation of the body. This is the process whereby all the body's conditions, functions and 'problems' are classified as medical issues which need to be researched, prevented and treated. This biomedical ideology is influential in sports and dance science (see Koutedakis and Sharp, 1999) and to a lesser extent in dance training.

Social constructionists on the other hand, argue that naturalism or biological reductionism cannot adequately explain all human experience or difference. Sociologist Chris Shilling notes that *'social constructionism'* is "an umbrella term to denote those views which suggest that the body is somehow shaped, constrained and even invented by society" (1993: 72). In this way, contemporary social theorists have found more credence in the idea that the body is a r*eceptor*, rather than *generator* of social meaning (Shilling, 1993: 72). From this perspective, the body is not the foundation for society, instead the meaning and character attributed to the body is socially and culturally produced. At the extreme end of the constructionist continuum, a Foucauldian perspective would argue that this biophysical state is constructed as an agent of power and control through a dominant and compelling biomedical discourse. Thus, a medical textbook is not a resource telling of 'truths' about the biological body, but a cultural artefact and should be treated as a cultural historical source (Bury, 1986). A more moderate stance would acknowledge that there is a biological genetic material basis to the body that is shaped, and written upon by social/cultural context.

Dance scholar Helen Thomas notes that social constructionist approaches privilege the symbolic, textual or discursive aspects of the body over and above, and often to the exclusion of, foundational, physical and experiential elements, which are also available in the history of the body (2003: 13). In so doing, Thomas suggests that social constructionist approaches have helped to sustain the dualisms inherent in the Western humanist tradition

of thought. The domination of social aspects over physical and psychological elements in classical sociology reinforces the culture/nature, mind/body dichotomies. Shilling notes that in these approaches the body is named as a theoretical space; telling us about how the body has been invaded, shaped, classified and made meaningful, without real analysis of what the object of the body is.

A phenomenological perspective can be seen to bridge the gap between the naturalist and social constructionist views to the body. Bryan Turner illustrates that there are "strong reasons for regarding the body as simultaneously both discursive and animated, both *Körper* and *Leib*, both socially constructed and objective" (Turner, 1992: 57). Turner reminds us that approaches to the body need to address the way the body exists and is represented in society, *and* what it is to be a body in the world. Turner emphasises (as Heidegger did before him (1979 [1927]: 99-100)) that human beings not only have bodies, but in fact are bodily. Phenomenological approaches to the body argue that human beings are 'embodied subjectivities' (Thomas, 2003: 29) and experience the relationship between themselves and the world from an embodied standpoint. The body does not simply house the mind, rather it is through our bodily lived experience that we interact, participate, and learn in the world. Turner notes that the notion of embodiment crystallises the idea that "making and doing the work of bodies – of becoming a body in social space" (1996: xiii).

The sociology and anthropology of dance stands in contrast to much scholarship on the body in dance in which there is an abundance of theorising, but very little empirical research. Research on the 'body and dance' is dominated by work that emphasises history (Adshead-Lansdale & Layson, 1994; Franko, 1993; Carter, 1998; McCarren, 1998), and gender, as well as feminist writings (Hanna, 1988, Thomas, 1995; Burt, 1995; Daly, 1995; Banes, 1998) and contemporary writings within dance studies are dominated by postmodern readings of 'dance as texts' (Fraleigh, 1996; Geollner and Murphy, 1995; Foster, 1996; Desmond (ed.), 1997; Adshead-Lansdale (ed.), 1999; Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999).

In short, "one of the paradoxical features of recent social studies of the body is how rarely one encounters in them actual living bodies of flesh and blood" (Wacquant, 1995: 65). Even in feminist analyses of dance, such as in the pioneering work by Susan Foster (1996; 1997)

and Sally Banes (1998), the body of the dancer is discussed in relation to the representation of the (female) body in ballet, with little attention paid to the material bodies of dancers, articulated through their lived embodied experience. This bias in the scholarship is acknowledged by Foster herself as she argues for a more "meat and-bones approach to the body" in dance which acknowledges the instructional practices and the daily routines that create a dancer's body (Foster, 1997: 235–6). This is echoed in American sociologist Kathy Davis' excellent title *Embodied Practices: Feminist Perspectives on the Body* (1997) where she suggests that bodies should not be looked at as texts or for their symbolic function, but also explored for "the particularities of embodied experiences and practices" (Davis, 1997: 15). While this project makes use the theoretical underpinnings identified in this chapter as analytical tools, the ethnographic approach adopted in the research aims to both explore the symbolic function of the dancing body in society, at the same time as illuminating the embodied experiences and practice of dancer themselves through methodologies grounded in long-term observation, participation and discussion with dancers themselves.

Dance, as other structured movement practices, is a particularly rich area for scholars interested in the body, both its symbolic and representational function, and its materiality and practice. In order to embrace these two strands, ethnographic methodology seems particularly important. While many dance scholars read about it from the comfort of their studies and watch dance sitting in the audience; the ethnographer stands in the wings, beside the rosin box, and observes and talks with the dancers in the dressing room and rehearsal studio, giving them a platform to voice their experiences. Thus dancers are three-dimensional human beings with whom academics collaborate in research, rather than two-dimensional representations who are the objects of study; the body is both the subject and the object of ballet.

1.2 Michel Foucault

The work of French theorist Michel Foucault is perhaps the most radical contribution to a social constructionist approach to the body. Foucault moves beyond the body as a receptor of social meanings, proposing instead that the body itself is a product of discourse and only given meaning as such. The materiality of the body is subsumed into an infinitely malleable, thus critically unstable, series of social constructions.

Foucault's work has been usefully employed by scholars working on dance to critique the tyranny of thinness which plagues female ballet dancers, to explore the organisation and surveillance of the professional ballet studio and university dance classroom respectively, as well as to comparatively analyse the body image and self-esteem of students in college jazz and ballet programmes (Green, 2003; Heiland et al, 2008; Ritenburg, 2010; Dryburgh and Fortin, 2010). It has also been central to discussions about the ways in which bodies can be trained, disciplined and created through institutions, and as such, is fertile ground for studies of ballet training. In particular, Foucault's discussion of the creation of the 'docile body' in 17th century soldiers in *Discipline and Punish* (1979 [1975]) is highly relevant in this project to examine the techniques used to create dancers (discussed in the Chinese context in chapter six). The military training example that Foucault describes to illuminate the disciplinary techniques enacted on the bodies of the individual imposed in societies as a form of control, constant coercion and manipulation, is especially pertinent. Not only through the mechanisms enacted in training in China, but also through the militaristic themes present in Chinese ballet (discussed in chapter four).

The Foucauldian approach hinges upon an epistemological view of the body as being produced by, and existing only in discourse. Perhaps the most important concept in his opus, Foucault's discourse refers to sets of 'deep principles' in which forms of representation, codes, conventions and habits of language that produce specific fields of culturally and historically located 'grids of meanings' which generate and establish relations between all that can be seen, thought and said (Dreyfus and Rainbow, 1982; Foucault, 1974). Discourse is

> ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern (Weedon, 1987: 108).

Therefore, in the Foucauldian approach, there is a preoccupation with the relationship between the body and the institutions of power which govern and regulate the body. However, the body is not simply a focus of discourse, but instead constitutes the link

between the daily practices of individuals on the one hand, and the large scale organisation of power on the other (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982). Through his examination Foucault seeks to understand the workings of power in modern societies and how this, in turn, generates knowledge. Knowledge and power for Foucault are inextricably linked and it is through an analysis of how they function and thus become unquestionably neutralised that we are able to uncover how "human beings are made subjects" (Rabinow, 1986: 7).

In *The History of Sexuality* (1984), Foucault identifies the body, and control of the body, as the central target or receptor for power/knowledge to operate through discourse. In creating a "history of bodies" (Foucault, 1984: 152) he locates not only the means or mechanisms by which bodies are invested and created, (the Foucauldian "technologies of power" (ibid)), but also the meanings and values which impact the construction of the subject. Foucault highlights the shift in discourse from a non-sentient, fleshy body, to a mindful body, which has repercussions for the individual subject. In *Discipline and Punish* (1979 [1975]), Foucault states that in traditional societies those who have committed the most serious offences were publicly brutally punished (citing ritual burning, assaults and dismembering as a highly visible, highly symbolic display of authority), in contrast to modern societies where deviants endure disciplinary techniques imposed by precisely mechanised institutions in order to access the mind of the individual. This highlights the shift in discourse from the control of the physical body to a control of the mind, which in turn facilitates a more efficient self-regulation of the body. This is best illustrated in the institutional space of the Panopticon, a circular prison design by Jeremy Bentham, which Foucault regarded as an ideal architectural modern of modern disciplinary power. Inmates are under constant surveillance from a central watchtower. Being under continual observation, from peers in addition to superiors, was supposed to stimulate prisoners to monitor themselves and exert self-control over their behaviour. Foucault demonstrates (1980) that a key component in the disciplining of bodies is the powerful technology of surveillance in institutional spaces. This key theory is particularly relevant in the training of dancers, discussed in greater depth in chapter six, who are subject to extreme regulation of movement, time, and use of body, through rigid institutional timetabling and uncompromising observation.

Foucault indicates that from the eighteenth century onwards, governments take increasing interest in the welfare of the population. In order for a state to maintain wealth and power in modern capitalism, its citizens must be healthy, strong, hard-working and productive. Thus the human body becomes a focus of governmental attention and intervention. From this analysis of the shift in discipline from overt fleshy brutality towards more covert regulation of bodies, Foucault develops the notion of 'bio-power' to refer to the way in which disciplinary technologies which are used to analyse, control, manipulate, regulate and define the human body and its behaviour. The aim of disciplinary technologies in schools, factories, prisons and hospitals is to produce a "docile body that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault, 1980: 198). Docile bodies are under constant surveillance, regulation and manipulation in subtle, often invisible ways, by systems which led to certain behaviours being normalised or defined as deviant. Bodies are spatially enclosed, partitioned, and ranked so as to maintain "order and discipline" (ibid). Foucault illustrates how this subjugation of the body is ordered, asserting that discipline bodies are inscribed with a concern for control which is internalised by each individual. This is illustrated by a concern with time-keeping, self-control over one's posture and bodily functions, concentration, sublimation of immediate desires and emotions, producing an individual who is subjugated by external systems into self-disciplining behaviours.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1979[1975]) Foucault identified techniques of disciplinary practice which fall loosely into categories; firstly, spatial enclosure and partitioning (141) ('cellular') where bodies are physically located in individual spaces with well-defined parameters. Control of activity (149) ('organic') is the process whereby specified activities are timetable, performed with rhythm and repetition, thus the body follows prescribed movement and scheduling with the goals of organisation and the prevention of idleness. The organisation of genesis (156)('genetic') follows the organisation of time and timed activities to ensure productivity, and lastly, the composition of forces ('combinatory') is the Marxian division of labour, stratification and organisation of hierarchies as units of production (Marx, 1954 [1887] vol. 1: 311-12).

> To sum up, it might be said that discipline creates out of the bodies it controls four types of individuality, or rather an individuality that is

> endowed with four characteristics: it is cellular (by the play of spatial distribution), it is organic (by the coding of activities), it is genetic (by the accumulation of time), it is combinatory (by the composition of forces). And, in doing so, it operates 'four great techniques: it draws up tables; it prescribes movements; it imposes exercises lastly, in order to obtain the combination of forces, it arranges 'tactics'. Tactics, the art of constructing, with located bodies, coded activities and trained aptitudes, mechanisms in which the product of the various forces is increased by their calculated combination are no doubt the highest form of disciplinary practice (Foucault, 1977: 167)

Characteristics of Individuality	**Techniques Employed**	**Examples**
Cellular— Spatial manipulation of the body	Draw up tables	C*ells, places, and ranks*
Organic—Coded activities that are temporally established for the body to follow	Prescribe movements and schedules	*Time-tables, monastic rituals, and following recipes*
Genetic—Accumulation of time constituting 'progress.'	Impose exercises	*Dictation, Homework, and Drills*
Combinatory—Composition of forces to attain efficiency.	Arranges 'tactics'	*"Knowledge of men, weapons, tensions, circumstances..."*

1.3 Erving Goffman

Although less frequently utilised by scholars investigating dance practices, the work of Goffman has been employed in the dance literature to describe the ways in which amateur adult ballet dancers stage a presentation of the self which consolidates the impression of the 'correct' manner and demeanour expected of a ballet dancer (Whiteside and Kelly, 2015). I include a discussion of his work here because, unlike the Foucauldian approach, it acknowledges greater agency on the part of the individual in the creation of the body, which resonates with how we feel we experience our bodies in relation to the social world.

Although situated in this perspective, the work of Goffman also somewhat counteracts the central criticism of the social constructionist approach to the body, the reduction of the body to a passive, subjugated entity being written upon, rather than a responsive agent in society.

As opposed to a Foucauldian perspective of power acting on or controlling the body, Canadian Sociologist Erving Goffman places more emphasis on the agency of the individual in his analysis. Goffman was specifically interested in the role of the body in everyday social interactions in both public and private spaces. His research therefore examines the negotiation between the rules of social interaction and an individual's choice/ability to follow them. We are not, however, under Goffman's analysis, completely free to use our body in any way. In what Goffman terms "shared vocabularies of bodily idiom" (1963: 35), conventional, non-verbal use of the body and body language – the most central component of behaviour in public spaces – we use the body and our bodily movement and conduct to label, differentiate, classify and 'grade hierarchically' (Shilling, 1993: 82) people. These classifications exert profound influence over the way in which individuals seek to manage and present their bodies. This provides some insight in the nature of the socially constrained management of the individual body. Here the body assumes the status of a resource which can be managed in a variety of ways in order to construct a particular vision of the self.

Shilling highlights the main concern of the body in Goffman's work. For Goffman, the body is the material property of an individual. In contrast to a naturalist perspective of the body, where an individual is determined by their biology, Goffman suggests that individuals have agency and control (albeit somewhat constrained) over their body in order to navigate social interaction. Additionally, in acknowledging that there is socially influenced and mediated management of the body, Goffman is suggesting that human bodies have dual location. They are the material property of the individual but shaped, defined and awarded status and significance through a negotiation with society/culture. This mediation of the body through societal interaction, becomes internalised in people's self-identity. The social meanings and status which are awarded to particular bodily forms and behaviours become internalised and thus, exert commanding influence over a person's sense of self-worth.

1.4 Pierre Bourdieu

French anthropologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) had as a central concern the body as a bearer of symbolic value in his theory of social reproduction. Bourdieu's theories are helpful to animate the way in which a society moulds, invests in and deploys human bodies in the world. Bourdieu attempts to bring together theoretical knowledge of the social world proposed from the outside, and the knowledge which is produced by the embodied experience of people in their world (Calhoun et al, 1993: 3). It is for this reason that Bourdieu's theories are often considered useful in research on the body and dance, in that they recognise the importance of including what Turner (1996: 26) has termed a 'foundationalist' approach to the body. For Turner, Foundationalism acknowledges (as noted above) that we *have*, and to an extent *are* bodies, in both a physical material sense, as well as social and cultural constructs, and in the way that human beings experience through their bodies. It is in this capacity that Bourdieu is a useful tool in investigating how the balletic body shapes, and is shaped, by the social world it inhabits. This is particularly relevant to the concerns of this project, and useful to identify the specific and unique mechanisms by which this is achieved in China. This theory will be applied in the discussion of the creation of a physical body with specific capital which reflects a habitus suitable for ballet in chapter six and again, in terms of social capital more broadly in chapter seven.

Existing sociological studies of ballet which have employed a Bourdieusian framework have explored students and dancers in full time training, body image, thinness and disordered eating, pain and injury, identity and retirement (Turner and Wainwright, 2003; Wainwright and Turner, 2004; Wainwright, 2004 [unpublished PhD thesis]; Wainwright and Turner, 2006; Wainwright, Williams, and Turner 2005, 2006, 2007; Alexias and Dimitropoulou, 2011; Tarr and Thomas, 2011; Pickard 2012; 2013; Tsitsou, 2014).

Bourdieu suggests the goal of social research is to uncover the most deeply buried structures of the social world, and the 'mechanisms' by which they reproduce or transform (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu's theories attempted to bridge the gap in the classical social theory of mid twentieth century France which was dominated by two differing perspectives; the *objectivist structuralism* exemplified by the Belgian anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss,

and *subjectivist existential* phenomenology of Jean-Paul Sartre (Lane, 2000). Bourdieu explored the ways in which objectivism (particularly structuralism) explains social thought and action in terms of overarching social structures, pressures and economic positioning. This strain of thought neglects individual's experiences, actions and interactions with the world. Conversely, subjectivism (exemplified in phenomenological approaches) which gives credence to individual or group agency, and the experience of being-in-the-world, neglects to adequately explore the objective structural conditions which produce specific action. Social life, Bourdieu argues, must be understood in terms that do justice both to objective material, social, and cultural structures, and to the constituting practices and experiences of individuals and groups. Bourdieu attempts to bring together theoretical knowledge of the social world proposed from the outside, and the knowledge which is produced by the embodied experience of people in their world (Calhoun et al, 1993). Bourdieu sought to transcend the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism with "structuralist constructivism or constructivist structuralism" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 11). Although it should be noted that Bourdieu's orthodoxy to the label has been disputed (see W.K. Lau, 2004).

The agency-structure dichotomy is perhaps the central feature of social theory (Archer, 1995). In this respect, Bourdieu links experiential agency (practice) with structure (in the forms of capital and field) through the process of habitus. The social world consists of various, semi-autonomous *fields* (such as education, the arts, religion) in which people exploit a various range of resources available to them in order to compete for status (symbolic capital). Bourdieu's use of the term *capital* is neither the Marxist nor formal economic use, but instead used to suggest the capacity to exercise control or power over ones position or that of others. In this formulation capital serves to mediate the individual and society. For Bourdieu, society is structured by a differential in the distribution of capital. The concentration and type of capital defines social trajectory, and serves to reproduce class distinctions. In this way Bourdieu can be described as placing class at the centre of his analysis. Therefore his is a theory of material determination of culture and history (Calhoun, 1993).

Much of Bourdieu's work is centred upon the relationship between different types of capital; economic as well as social, and perhaps most central to my analysis, cultural and physical capital. At the root of capitalism in all modern societies is economic capital, which in Bourdieu's conception is the most efficient form of capital, however it must be symbolically mediated. Without any mediation, the arbitrary nature of the inequality in the distribution and reproduction of economically determined power and wealth would be exposed. Therefore, Bourdieu argues, symbolic capital functions to legitimate the position of the ruling class by essentialising and naturalising a hierarchy of symbolic capital.

Helen Thomas (2003: 57) notes how the Bourdieusian body is a carrier of symbolic value (in the form of physical or cultural capital) which when it interacts with external structural and social forces, is central to the preservation and reproduction of social inequalities. For Bourdieu, the body becomes inscribed and invested with power, status and other forms of capital which can ultimately be efficiently converted into economic capital. Bourdieu is concerned with the body as a bearer of value in society. The body is not only a source of labour power or a consumer under capitalism, but has a physical capital in itself. The body possesses power, status and distinctive symbolic forms which are integral to the accumulation of resources in different fields.

> Social bodies, then, are not simply written on pages. Rather they are produced by acts of labour, which in turn have a bearing on how individuals develop and maintain their physical being. . . . As the individual's body comes to be formed, it bears the unmistakable marks of his or her social class. (Thomas, 2003: 57)

Chris Shilling notes that under Bourdieu's conception, bodies bear the imprint of their social class as a result of three main factors; social location, habitus and resulting body hexis, and the development of an individual's tastes. The social location of a body refers to the material circumstances of individuals' everyday lives. Social location can also be surmised as people's 'distance from necessity', or economic, cultural or social want (Shilling, 1993; Bourdieu, 1985).

Habitus is a central concept of Bourdieu's theory. It can be defined as a system of dispositions; lasting, acquired schemes of perception, thought and action. The habitus is a

"socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures" which enables individuals to have class-specific, predisposed methods of understanding and relating to familiar and novel situations or encounters (Brubaker, 1985: 758). Our habitus is the sum of all our experience, as well as conscious and unconscious understanding, which shapes our social practises, and therefore actions of the present and future (Wainwright, 2006: 536).

> [. . .] systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990a: 53).

This is a circular process, a mutually consisting set of interactions whereby the social structures that shape action and embodied knowledge, are also themselves shaped through the individuals and groups which are predisposed to structuring; they both shape, and are shaped by social practices. Bourdieu developed the concept of habitus to illustrate the ways in which the body is not only in the social world, but also the ways in which the social world is in the body (Bourdieu, 1977).

1.5 Inter-theoretical Approaches

The theoretical work by Bourdieu and Foucault are two of the most influential contributions in the lineage of post-structural and postmodern thought. Bourdieu's and Foucault's notions of power, knowledge and culture have reshaped the ways theorists working in the social sciences and humanities theorise institutions, structures and social interaction. They oblige researchers to engage self-reflexive methodologies, questioning our own positionality in our applications of theory (Hogeveen and Woolford 2006).

Whereby Foucault could be considered an historian and philosopher, Bourdieu was an anthropologist and sociologist who engaged in empirical research. This project makes use of some of the aspects of both the theories of Foucault and Bourdieu outlined in this chapter, not to create a singular 'Frankenstein theory' from a single disciplinary perspective with a coherent approach to the structure-agency dichotomy, but to acknowledge that both these theories can be usefully applied to ballet in order to illuminate the different properties and

characteristics of the dancer's bodily experiences in relation to the social world in which they operate. Moreover, the use of multiple theoretical perspectives recognises that that no one theory developed outside the field of study can adequately articulate the totality of the experience in a particularly specialised social world.

The work of Goffman has been significant in alerting social theorists to the role of the body in the construction of the person. For Goffman, the body formed an implicit foundation for his theories of stigma, face-work, embarrassment and the social self. However, unlike Bourdieu's habitus and theory of practice, or Foucault's docile body, Goffman never produced a specific theory of embodiment. This is why Goffman's work receives relatively less attention in this project.

A systematic comparison between Bourdieu's and Foucault's theories of culture and power is outside the scope of this project, and is more generally under theorised in scholarship. However there are some compelling ways in which the theories could be considered to be interrelated. Both theories are based on critiques of subject-centred analyses of power. Both strive to offer original accounts of modern social institutions. Several scholars, such as French scholar Michel de Certeau (1988), sociologist David Eick (2004) and philosopher David Couzens Hoy (2005: 101), highlight similarities in the theories and suggest they are worth considering as complementary. David Eick (2004) suggested that in both theories power is not only repressive but also generative in its effects, predisposing subjects to act in ways that align with cultural expectations. Importantly, he notes that this is embodied in practice. He also draws highlights strong similarities in Foucault's and Bourdieu's analyses of discourse as a site of conflict that sets out rules for appropriate social behaviour (Eick, 2004: 85). Foucault and Bourdieu both consider power as a network of relations whilst simultaneously acting as a structuring force. Foucault's notion of discourse is conceived of power as networks of relations. Bourdieu also made use of a series of relations because his theory of practice is relational in nature. There is a relationship between the social and the individual (in field, capital and habitus) and between structures and mechanism of power which are reproduced. On this point Eick (2004) identifies similarities in their discussions of the mechanisms of power in institutions such as schools which is particularly useful for this project.

Perhaps of greatest importance to this project is a point of connection articulated by David Eick. That is that Bourdieu's theory of the body in the habitus bares striking resonance with Foucault's notion of the societal disciplining of bodies (Eick, 2004: 86-93). The relationship of the habitus in Bourdieu's work and discipline in Foucault's presents a unique standard of cultural existence that signified ways of ordering and regulating the social world without its formal explication. In each conception, there is little theorising of the individual agent because subjectivity is produced on a larger scale, reproduced by those practising it, contained within the framework of established social order through the modes of habitus and discipline. David Couzens Hoy (2005) takes this a step further when he proposes that Foucault and Bourdieu could usefully be placed within the same framework because to his mind, Bourdieu could be read as extending Foucault's account of how subjectivity is constructed through power relations.

Despite these similarities, it has been noted that Bourdieu and Foucault present distinct or even contradictory conceptions of power (Cronin, 1996; Geèienë, 2002). Bourdieu's central concern in his analysis of power is diffused symbolic power, which, he claimed, is present in all social relations, is possessed, enacted and used as an instrument of domination between individual and groups. Professor of Sociology Richard Jenkins (1992) argues that Bourdieu's analysis of how power operates at the institutional level; how institutions are run and controlled, inter-and intra-organisational politics, and bureaucracy as a particularly modern social process, is weak. The field, as identified by Bourdieu, is a site where power is enacted by individuals and groups, but how specific fields create a superstructure when power is manifest is less clear.

In contrast to Bourdieu, Foucault's writing emphasises not the relationship between groups in terms of legitimate power and domination, i.e. "Who has the power and how do they use it?", but instead is concerned with how power functions in society – the techniques that have become embodied in local, national and global material institutions (Smart, 1985: 78). From this perspective, power cannot be considered a possession or capacity of groups or individuals (as Bourdieu sees it) (Foucault, 1979; 98) and this is cannot be acquired or seized. More accurately, it is embedded through the whole social body, exercised through networks from which individuals cannot escape. Sociologist Madan Sarup notes that

"Foucault states that the mechanisms, techniques and procedures of power were not invented by the bourgeoisie, were not the creation of class seeking to exercise effective forms of domination" (Sarup, 1988: 74). Therefore, instead of centring his analysis on motivation or interests of individuals or groups to explore domination and societal stratification as Bourdieu did, Foucault highlights the mechanics (or technologies) of power (Foucault, 1986: 58).

Although not unproblematic, drawing upon multiple theoretical and methodological resources is not antithetical with the methodologies employed by either theorist themselves. Nor could it be considered incompatible with the theoretical contributions. Feminist philosopher Joannah Oksala describes Foucault's work as "a toolbox, a flexible and varied methodological approach that draws from a multiplicity of sources and is applicable to a variety of questions" (Oksala, 2011: 86). Furthermore, Bourdieu's collaborator Loïc Wacquant suggested that Bourdieu's conceptions have been construed as being of most value when deployed creatively in context (Wacquant, 1989: 50). This can be seen on his own work on boxing practices (Wacquant, 1995).

Following others such as Finnish scholars Susanna Hannus and Hannu Simola (2010) this project will synthesise elements of the theories of Bourdieu and Foucault to show how they can be deployed complementarily to understand macro and micro considerations of power. Specifically, this project will use the theories identified in this chapter as a base from which to explore both the institutional mechanisms which have implications for the creation and use of the body in ballet in China, and the repercussions of the individual dancer's embodiment for the practice. It will highlight the negotiation between the structure and the individual. The use of these social theories should illuminate the relationship between the body, self, society and culture which is central to understanding their embodied in art and everyday practices. An examination of the philosophical conceptualisations of the body will follow in chapter two, and an analysis of the political ideologies, as well as the resultant policy in China, chapters three and four, will generate a picture of how and why ballet as a structural institution came to be in China. Chapters four, six, and seven will make use of the theories of Bourdieu and Foucault to reveal how the construction of the body is experienced and generated by the individual. By using these two theories in a single study I endeavour to

reflect the experience of the dancer who is both an object that is structured by society and an agent who contributes to the structures she both constitutes and operates within. This chapter has laid the theoretical groundwork from which the following specific analysis of the ballet body in China will develop in the next part.

CHAPTER TWO: 2.1 Chinese Conceptions of the Body

As was identified in the previous chapter, there is a substantial academic interest in the body in Western scholarship charting the numerous ways that the body has been conceptualised and reconceptualised. It illustrates a fluid, ever evolving, mutually informing relationship between the body and culture, and exploring the body as conceptualised in China is no different. China has a large territory, huge population and a recorded history which dates for over four thousand years, as such one cannot assume a singular Chinese conception of the body, static over time, place and people. 'The Body Project', as it has become to be known in the West, explores philosophical and theoretical thinking to point out that the body should be a significant axis for the analysis of society. It legitimises the body as a site of cultural investigation. This chapter aims to investigate elements of Chinese philosophy, culture and history which have had significant impact on the construction of the body in a Chinese context. It will draw together some of the vast literature and thinking from Classical Chinese philosophy, specifically Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, examining the literature to uncover the implications for the physical body, (as described by the scholarly classes) as the central concern and as an axis for exploring culture and power more broadly. Furthermore, it highlights the body as a location for debate centred on China, which surveys the changing nature of ideology, power, social structures and cultural systems from ancient times to the inception of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. Understanding how the body has been traditionally conceptualised in China will enable a discussion of the dancing body in a Chinese context, where ballet sits at the convergence of Western constructs of the body, as well as ideas about embodiment which are unique to the Chinese location. A thorough understanding of these perspectives is essential to comprehend the interplay of elements in a Chinese manifestation of an embodied Western art practice.

On the surface level, at least, we are enculturated unwittingly, if not totally against our will to become members of linguistic and cultural communities. We have little choice in adopting the peculiarities of our culture, or the language spoken around us, just as we have very little choice in the collection of flesh and bone features that create our human bodies. Sociologist Bryan Turner highlights 'the ontological centrality of human embodiment . . . as a

site of universality' (in Featherstone, Hepworth & Turner (eds.), 1991: 1), and while this is fundamentally true, it is more problematic to assume that we all conceptualise our bodies in the same way. Anthropologist Andrée Grau (2005: 141) noted that even the term 'body' cannot be considered a universal concept; it is conceived through a Western way of seeing and making sense of the world. That notwithstanding, it is important to investigate emic understandings of the body; in how the body is conceived and experienced, as well as the symbolism and meaning attached to bodies, within a specific cultural framework. An embodied sense of being in the world is made in relationship with the broader culture.

Historically concepts of the body formed part of wider beliefs about the universe and humankind's place within it. Today some beliefs from Chinese classical philosophy still exist in an altered form, and they sit alongside conceptions of the body in its relation to wider society as proposed by the communist state. The manifestation of society's interaction with the body can be seen in everyday practices (which are themselves embodied), while at the same time the body is shaped by broader historical - cultural traditions that include Chinese classical philosophy, medicine and politics. Therefore, body culture in China, as elsewhere in the world, occupies a space at the convergence of macro institutionalised culture and micro perfunctory daily practice. While many of the conceptions of and relationships between the body, the individual and society, and broader culture discussed in this chapter are not unique to China (for example, the unequal treatment of women (discussed on p.36) has, and continues to, blight our humanity worldwide), their Chinese iterance might have culturally specific manifestations, functions as well as origins. Thus, while some phenomena explored are not uniquely Chinese, they are worthy of investigation so as to identify issues particular to their location.

In her 1995 ethnography of sports training and competition in China, American anthropologist Susan Brownell illuminates the problem of language in exploring concepts cross culturally. While in English we have a single unified word, '*the* body', in Chinese there are at least three different root words; *shen* [身] which is an animate body; *ti* [体] which is an inanimate body; and, *shi* [尸] a dead body. These roots can be combined in multiple ways to generate different meanings, for example, *shen ti* [身体] which translates to

'body/health' and *shi ti* [尸体], 'corpse'. This is similar to the German distinction between *Körper,* 'body'; *Leib,* 'living body' and *Leiche*, 'corpse'. *Shen* is used in Chinese when referring to people and their relationship with others, and is commonly used by Chinese people when referring to concepts in English such as 'self', 'personality' or 'individual' (Sun Lee-Kung, 1983, in Brownell, 1995, 16). Australian Professor of Chinese history, Mark Elvin (1989, in Brownell, ibid) translates *shen* as 'body-person' and notes that it implies a lived body and non-material aspects such as the mind. Brownell continues, noting that *ti* is the character used in words which denotes 'physical culture' [*ti yu* [体育]), and suggests that the primary characteristic of *ti* is of an individual closed unit or system. This is interesting because it highlights that in the Chinese conception, the body which engages in physical culture is the inanimate body (*ti)*. This might suggest a way of thinking that is something akin to the mind-body dichotomy which prevails in Western philosophy. The (inanimate (*ti*)) body of sports and physical culture is merely a highly trained, stand-alone vessel, for the self (*shen)* in its connection to others.

While a fuller exploration of the linguist specificities of Mandarin Chinese is outside the scope of my discussion, it is important to note how the use of language reflects and contributes to different conceptualisations of the body and its interaction with wider culture.

The body in Chinese Classical Philosophy

Elements of Chinese philosophy have existed for several thousands of years, however, the majority of Chinese philosophy originated during a period known as the 'Hundred Schools of Thought' (*zhu zi bai jia* [诸子百家]) spanning the 6th century to the 3rd century BC. It was an era of great cultural and intellectual expansion in China. Prior to The Enlightenment and dawn of the scientific age, the body, and the natural world, had to be explained metaphorically. During the 16th and 17th centuries AD, government officials and scholars espoused a syncretic approach to the 'three teachings' (*san jiao* [三教]), Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism) integrating the authority derived from the doctrines of these three traditions. The existential nature of Chinese philosophy means it is often interpreted as purely a socio-ethical-political system of thought, however, despite no official

recognition by the Chinese government, Confucianism contains comprehensive metaphysical ideas, and leads many sinologists to argue that it is in fact a religious tradition (Adler, 2003). Confucianism was considered the pinnacle of these three teachings, and thus, is perhaps the most important and influential doctrine to explore in relation to ideas of the body.

Dynasty	People and Events
Legendary Period (2852–2197 B.C.)	Fu Xi-Yin Yang Shen Nong Huang Di
Primitive Dynasties (2197–221 B.C.)	
Xia (Hsia) (1994–1523 B.C.)	'Great Flood' brought under control
Shang (Yin) (1523–1027 B.C.)	Casting of bronze
Zhou (Chou) (1027–221 B.C.)	**Confucius**, **Lao Tzu (Father of Taoism)**, and Mencius
Ancient Dynasties (221 B.C.–618 A.D.)	
Qin (Ch'in) (221–207 B.C.)	Great Wall built; languages standardized
Han (207 B.C.–220 A.D.)	**Confucianism** established **Buddhism** introduced (64 A.D.)
Three Kingdoms (220–265 A.D.)	
Jin (Chin) (265–420 A.D.)	
North and South (420–589 A.D.)	**Buddhism** well developed
Sui (589–618 A.D.)	
Medieval Dynasties (618–1368 A.D.)	
Tang (T'ang) (618–905 A.D.)	Arts and literature developed, printing invented
Five Dynasties (905–960 A.D.)	
Song (Sung) (960–1279 A.D.)	**Neo-Confucian philosophy**
Yuan (Mongol) (1280–1368 A.D.)	Marco Polo to China
Modern Dynasties (1368–1911 A.D.)	
Ming (1368–1644 A.D.)	Painting, industry, all arts flourish
Qing (Ch'ing, Manchu) (1644–1911 A.D.)	Opium War. T'aiping Rebellion

(Dean, 2001: 6, adapted from Tsuei (Ed), 1992, and Fairbank, Reischauer (Eds), 1989)

2.2 Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism and the Body

For nearly 2000 years, as a philosophy of life and religious doctrine, Confucianism provided the political, social and moral foundation for mainstream Chinese culture. It is, in essence a system of social ethics. It has contributed a rigid social structure and ensured a strict immobile hierarchy (Jaywardena, 1986: 170). Confucius (552 BC – 479 BC) lived most of his life in the state of Lu, modern day Shandong Province. He was raised by his mother in poverty after his father died when he was just three years old. A member of the scholar or professional class, *shi* [士], Confucius studied intensely, eventually become a mid-level bureaucrat. Confucius was a thinker and teacher, comparable to Socrates in the West, who developed a social and political philosophy which has been incredibly influential in Chinese philosophy. Confucius' many students developed a fragmentary text called the *Analects* (c.

475 BC–221 BC), from collections of his sayings. These discussions on politics, morality, duty, deportment, ritual, propriety and family responsibility, although not written by Confucius himself, remain at the core of classical Chinese texts and Confucian canon.

While a full exploration of Confucianism is outside the scope of my discussion here, there are some central tenets which are useful to understand how Confucianism underpins social systems, ideology, and facilitates social control in China, as well as manifests itself in attitudes to the body. Firstly, the principle of 'Three Bonds'- absolute loyalty, devotion and obedience - were due from son to father, from wife to husband and from ministers to Prince (Chen, 1979: 13, in Hong, 1997: 18). These bonds (filial piety) enforce rigid social groups with corresponding rights and duties, which were not only required at a social level, but also inscribed in law.

Secondly, the concept of *Li* (禮 -rite, ritual, morality, propriety, etiquette), is one of two fundamental guiding principles of Confucianism[2]. *Li* refers to the proper bodily observance of the propriety, rituals and etiquette dictated by the strict social hierarchy imposed by the 'Three Bonds' principle. It should be noted that the rites and rituals denoted by *li* are not rites and rituals as might be conceptualised through the Western lens of social/religious/cultural customs. Instead, *li* embodies interaction with people, nature and material objects. It could be considered a conception comparable with the very broad notion of 'culture'. *Li* was "the embodied expression of what is right" (Wechsler 1985, 24, quoting Legge's 1967 translation of the *liji* [礼记] *Book of Rites* c. 200 BC). The rules of propriety reflected one's social status and defined according privileges and obligations. *Li* facilitated social order, instilled moral values and regulated social conduct, and thus, "came to be regarded as the very principle upon which Chinese civilization was based" (Wechsler, 1985: 24). The obligation of propriety became sanctioned by law.

2 The other fundamental principle of Confucianism is *ren* ([亻仁 –] goodness, benevolence, humanness) which is the feeling that is produced and an outward expression of living a life in harmony with Confucian ideals. While this is an important concept, it is less relevant to my purpose here.

The Confucian tradition of *Li* has highly influenced Chinese culture. Sociologist Fan Hong, notes that *Li* has been successful in forming the personality of the individual within the parameters of their prescribed role. In this way, *li* was an effective method of social control. Philosopher John Pocock (1964) observes that when one is given commands verbally, there is always the chance that the recipient will think of the possibility of not completing the instruction. As *li* is performative in nature, a bodily manifestation of duty and social order, it circumvents the idea that verbal commands could invoke resistance. The bodily nature of *li* is illustrated in a metaphor employed by Xun Zi (荀子 – one of the two divergent tendencies in ancient Confucianism, naturalistic Confucianism (c. 298—238 BC)), who used dancing as a metaphor for *li*. "How do we know the meaning of dancing?" he asked, and surmised that the dancer themselves "exerts to the utmost all the strength of his body to keep time to the measures of the sounds of the drum and bell, and has no rebellious heart" (Pocock, 1964:6; Brown, 1995: 126). Although it is not unproblematic to draw direct ethnographic parallels between distinct cultures and ways of thinking, this idea resonates with the Foucauldian notion of 'docility' (explored in the previous chapter), in that a trained body is disciplined and controlled in its performance of its social positioning (in Foucauldian terms, power is enacted within the grid of meaning inherent to discourse which enables the effective discipline of individuals and society). This resonance is interesting when exploring how a Western genre such as ballet (which functions in accordance with Foucauldian discipline), is resituated in China. These similarities might contribute to a successful reimagining of ballet as, eventually, a thriving indigenous genre in China.

Amongst other ideas, *li* ensured absolute conformity in behaviour in accordance with rigid social positioning, which allowed for the unequal treatment of woman. Following the 'Three bonds' dogma and a belief in the concept of 'Yin' and 'Yang'; the bodies of men and women were considered very differently. In Chinese philosophy 'Yin' symbolised femininity, characterised as dark, weak and passive. 'Yang' by contrast is the bright, strong and active symbol of masculinity. The whole universe fell into these interacting and complementary parts. This dualism heaped superior qualities upon men, leaving women with inferior characteristics. This had bodily consequences; women were actually and symbolically

constrained through the process of footbindings[3], and thus, unable to walk more than short distances, they were relegated to the home. The practice of footbinding had consequences for health in both the short and long term. Women's resulting inability to engage in much physical activity at all, meant their bodies were weak, perpetuating ideas of yin and the feebleness of femininity. Ideas of chastity only applied to women and if a woman had the misfortune to be raped, it would be expected that she commit suicide (Hong, 1997: 19). It is clear, that *li* as a philosophical concept has real world implication for the body, specifically the body of women in China.

The Body and Exercise under Confucianism

Many influential Confucian scholars, such as Yu Dan (in Wilcox, 2011) and Fang Hong (1997), contend that an appreciation for the physical body and veneration of body cultivation or virtuosity is simply non-existent in Confucianism. They highlight sanctions against showing the body for both men and women, the loose robing worn as well as a taboo about talking about the human physique as evidence of this. At the same time, cultivation of the physical body and exercise under Confucianism served as an educative tool with the aim of achieving well developed morality[4] through non-competitive physical activity. The Confucius legacy with an emphasis on social stability and ritual meant that any sense of competition was brushed aside, instead there was an emphasis on harmony of movement representing coherence and cohesion (Lui, 1983 in Hong, 1997: 5).

Confucianism associated bodily cultivation and physical virtuosity with moral refinement and cultural status, and therefore, competition was distasteful. The 'Six Arts' (*liu yi* [六藝]) in Confucianism – ritual, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy and arithmetic were held as the essential components of a classical education and critical to becoming a cultivated

3 According to anthropologist Susan Greenhalgh's self-admittedly conservative estimate, approximately 60 – 80% of Chinese women suffered bound feet. This rose to 100% of upper class women (1977: 7).

4 This link between training the body and morality has long roots in China, tracing a thematic thread from its development under Confucianism to the body as conceived in Maoism in the twentieth century. Anthropologist Emily Wilcox notes; "Confucian and Taoist traditions of aesthetic and moral self-cultivation contributed to the adoption of a particularly aesthetic approach in socialist China to the Marxist notion that physical labor leads to personal enlightenment and social reform." (Wilcox, 2011: V).

gentleman (Wilcox, 2011; Tu, 1983, 1985). Confucius himself was said to have taught archery and charioteering (Cleverley, 1985: 6).

Through centuries of Confucian influence the popular Chinese sports of archery, and the martial arts, Wushu [武术] lost their competitive nature. Archery, formally a highly competitive event, evolved into an extremely ritualised ceremony which placed greater emphasis on the form and grace of the sportsman than on the rivalry. Following *li*; the ceremony required grand bows, special arrows and was accompanied by specific music, all corresponding to the social status of the individual (Zhou, 1986 in Hong, 1997: 20).

These ritualised, aestheticized, displays of physical virtuosity constitute important techniques through which an orientation to the world is instilled. In this instance, *li* is embodied through both the corporeal manipulation of symbols as well as in the symbolic manipulation of the body. Confucius recognised this cyclical principle fifteen hundred years before Bourdieu. When structured body movements are allocated symbolic and moral significance, and frequently repeated, they generate a perception of and orientation toward the world that is habitual because the body in its constitution of, and interaction with society reinforces it (Brownell, 1995). Thus under Confucianism ritual becomes the symbolic bodily expression of social order. Parallels can be drawn with the Bourdieusian thinking identified in the previous chapter. In Bourdieu's 'habitus', an individual's interaction with and relationship to, the social world is written on their physicality as bodily symbolism. This is a circular process, a mutually consisting set of interactions whereby the social structures that shape action and embodied knowledge, are also themselves shaped through the individuals and groups which are predisposed to structuring; they both shape, and are shaped by social practices. In summary, ([habitus] [capital]) + field = practice (Bourdieu, 1984: 101).

After the Song Dynasty (960 – 1279 AD), *li xue,* [理學] a Confucian school of idealist philosophy prevailed as an official doctrine. *Li xue* advocated propriety in seriousness, stillness and quietude. If *li* is an expression of the right way, then it was reasoned that there was no better way to seek this than within the self. The preferred method for doing this,

was *jing zuo* [靜坐] which is translated as 'quiet sitting'. This measured relationship to the world was expressed in the deportment of the Confucian cultivated gentleman. He wore long robes, large hats, and was slow, careful and delicate in his speech and movement.

> Among other features, they chose to wear a tall hat with a pointed top, a Beret like gear for casual wear, a roomy gown with broad sleeves, and a fine white-gauze shirt underneath. Their mannerism was strict: they sat squarely with their back erect, walked in measured steps looking straight ahead, bowed slowly and deeply to express sincere propriety, spoke in a dignified way with few gestures and carefully made at that (Liu, 1973: 497 in Cleveland Tillman, 1992: 21).

The emphasis on the cultivation of spiritual, mental and moral faculties, and respect for scholarly talents, was made at the expense of physical cultivation. This attitude to physical cultivation is summed up in the Confucian adage of 'Those who work with their brains rule, those who work with their brawn are ruled' (in Brownell, 1995: 190). This discouraged the development of physical culture and contributed to a stereotype of the East as people weak, and China's label as 'The Sick Man of Asia'[5].

The Song Dynasty revival of Confucianism (often called Neo-Confucianism) responded to the challenge of Buddhist metaphysics by developing its own account of the natural and human world. Neo-Confucianism emphasised self-cultivation as a path not only to self-fulfilment but to the formation of a virtuous and harmonious society and universe. To understand the Neo-Confucian body, it is essential to understand the concept of *qi* [氣-vital, material force). *Qi* is a material force which links the body and mind into one system; *qi* constitutes and flows through all things, giving them form and vitality. As *qi* is in and essentially constitutes everything, there is no distinction between the self and the universe.

Qi reinforced a sense of self whose substance was concretely joined with others. *Qi* links generations of families, passing from parent to child, acting as a material link between ancestors and descendants (Lee, 1993: 606). Kwõn Kim (1352—1409), Korean Neo-Confucian scholar, explains, "this ki [qi], though it belongs to heaven and earth, is also

5 The phrase the 'Sick Man of Aisa' [东亚病夫] originally made reference to China in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a period of internal division, political instability, and invasion by other nations, especially the Japanese. The phrase mocks the Chinese government and Chinese people for being weak.

entirely founded upon the bodies of my ancestors and passed on to me; so although my ancestors have already passed away, their ki is in me and has never ceased" (trans. in Lee, 1993: 606—7). The family constituted a unified body through *qi*, and the identity of self and family was uninterrupted and undifferentiated. The Neo-Confucian body did not refer to simply fleshy corporeality, nor to an individual. Rather, it suggests a prominence of the notion of non-distinction between self and others, which produced a sense of the body that was fluid, with no boundaries to determine a distinction between one's family and one's self. A body with connection to the wider universe and all it comprises (Kim, 2003).

In accordance with filial piety, the body was bequeathed by one's parents, and thus took on an almost sacred status. It was to be respected and remain unaltered (DeBary et al, 1960: 469; Fairbank, 1992: 175; Lee, 1993: 606-7). With the preoccupation of the cultivation of the mind, there is little attention paid to the bodies of men in Neo-Confucianism. This self-cultivation had sagehood as its end goal. Sagehood was a central idea of Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism, and represented supreme human virtue; a flawless, empathetic responsiveness to every situation in which one finds oneself. In Neo-Confucianism, women were incapable of achieving sagehood, and therefore had neither the need nor the ability to strive for transcendence of the self and body. While men produced their selves through the mind (study of the classic texts) and body (maintenance of the family body (linked through *qi*)) by a process of ancestor worship), women were occupied with maintaining and reproducing the family through the corporeal bodies of the constituting individuals. The Neo-Confucianist central tenets of body mind-qi, and transcendence of the self, were a conception of the male body only. Neo-Confucianism stressed the corporeality of the female body, the very aspect men were supposed to transcend.

The rational for this divergence in thinking stems from the belief that women had inferior *qi* to that of men. Women were the passive vessels of life which men implanted in them, and played no active role in the creation of life (Yoon, 1990: 10). Therefore a woman's body was only valued as a carrier of life, and *qi* through which the male line could be maintained. As a result, women were strictly regulated before and during pregnancy, and expected to behave following particularly austere decorum. Women's bodies were disciplined for the sake of the potential child within them. Korean sociologist Taeyon Kim (2003) argues that women were

regarded as subjectless bodies. With no inherent value, interest in women's thoughts and conduct were for the sake of the other abiding in their bodies. They had no value beyond the children and labour (in feeding, curing and cleansing the family) that their bodies could produce. Kim (2003) suggests that female subjectlessness was distinct from male selfless subjectivity in Neo-Confucianism. While male selflessness aimed to transcend corporeality, women could never do so - their physical bodies were too valuable. A man's mind and *qì* were considered to be more valuable than his flesh and bones, while value in a woman was found in her body and its reproductive labour. As a result, there was significant pressure to control women's bodies, subjecting them to a protection and concealment in vast robes, which rendered the body practically invisible.

2.3 Daoism (Taoism) and the Body

Daoism is a philosophical, ethical and religious tradition which emphasises living in harmony with *Dao*, 'way', 'principle' or 'path'. *Dao*, [道] although considered fundamentally ineffable, is both the source of and driving force behind everything. Daoism was solidified through the retroactive grouping of ideas and writings one or two centuries after their conception. The philosophies of Laozi, and Zhuangzi, loosely connected into texts, form the cornerstone of Daoist thinking. "The designation Taoism [Daoism] generally groups together differing, sometimes even antithetical, intellectual currents that do not have too much in common than a conception of the tao, the unfathomable law of nature" (Unschuld, 1986: 101). Daoism shares much with Confucian principles; central to both are ideas of *qì* and belief in the yin-yang division of the universe. A concern with *wu wei* (action through non-action [无为]), 'naturalness', simplicity, spontaneity, and the 'Three Treasures' of compassion, moderation and humility, are uniquely fundamental to Daoism. Only by complying with the law of *dao* can humans continue to exist. However, human behaviour bears no consequence to *dao*. As individuals share the directive of *dao* with all other people, the bodies of individuals are not separate from society. Italian Daoist scholar and translator, Fabrizio Pregadio notes that the body is often described in bureaucratic metaphors, with governing the state likened to self-cultivation. He points to a passage in the Riversage Heshang Gong's edition of the Laozi;

> If in governing the body one cherishes one's breath, the body will be complete. If in governing the country one cherishes the people, the country will be peaceful. Governing the body means to inhale and exhale Essence and Breath (*jing* and *qi*) without letting one's ears hear them. Governing the country means to distribute virtue (*de*) and bestow grace (*hui*) without letting the lower ones know it. (*Laozi Heshang gong zhangju*, 10, Erkes, 1950: 27 in Pregadio, 2013: 75)

Pregadio also indicates that the bureaucratic metaphor is extended when writing about the body in Chinese traditional medicine which evolves from Daoist and Confucian principles. In addition to the Chinese terms for the body identified by Susan Brownell and Sun Lee-Kung, Pregadio suggests another term used in traditional Chinese philosophy to denote the human body. *Xing* [形] is translated as 'form' and needs to be understood in relation to Daoist thinking. Form is conceptualised in contrast to the notion of 'formlessness' (*wuxing* [無形]) which is a property of *Dao*. From this understanding, 'form' refers to embodiment as the feature that identifies each entity in the 'world of form', differentiating it from –while simultaneously relating it to – all other entities.

2.4 Buddhism and the body

Early Chinese Buddhism had as a central concern, the relationship between the physical body and *xin* [心]. There is some discussion amongst Buddhologists about the translation of *Xin* (Benika, 2003). *Xin* can mean the physical heart, but also, 'mind', and is commonly translated as 'heart/mind', and thought responsible for cognitive, affective and emotional activates. The relationship between the body and the *xin* in Early Buddhism largely concentrated on the connection between the physical form and the soul. The Buddhist tradition in China regarded the body and the *xin* as mutually dependent. Chan Buddhism (6 - 8 centuries CE) taught there is no, separate, permanent, stable, or unchanging self. Human beings are an impermanent composite of interdependent physical, emotional and cognitive components. To view the body or the mind at the 'true' self is mistaken.

With the development of Buddhism in China in its contact with Daoism, the focus of exploration became questions of what kind of existent or substance *xin* was, how the *xin* functioned and how it would end. In this period, the physical body as a carrier of and an object activated by *xin*, had shifted to a secondary position. Buddhist scholars declared that

the *xin* and the physical body were a unified whole, but the physical body was secondary to the primacy of *xin*, which was completely self-contained, self-dominated and could activate and transform the physical body (Zhang, 2007).

The secondary importance of the physical body in Buddhism is also apparent in the approach to metaphysics. Although there are various formations according to the doctrines of different sects, Buddhists strive for a state of Nirvana, in which the three afflictions of greed, anger and ignorance come to an end. The nature of Nirvana is "eternality, pleasure, self and purity", and in such a state the physical body ceases to exist. While it may seem that following a doctrine in which the ultimate aim is a state where the physical is overcome, provides little motivation to cultivate the body, Chinese Buddhism (Chan School) provides an answer. It suggests that the stages of practices and the levels of achievements completely depend upon the degrees of enlightenment; and to gain enlightenment in the sense of spirit, one will have to constrain their physical body because it is the main source of the greed, anger and ignorance of human beings. The cultivation of spirit will bring the physical body to a similarly enlightened state. In this view, the physical body is viewed ambivalently; attachment to physical pleasure and repulsion from pain are considered obstacles to enlightenment. The discipline of meditation presupposes and aims to enhance the mind/body unity. Therefore, it was thought that the cultivation of a strong and disciplined mind through meditative practice can make physical bodies stronger. The text *Body Mind Techniques Part II (xin shu xia* [心术下]) found in the Guanzi collection of scholarly writings, supports this thesis, stating that "those who behave properly and remain peaceful in their minds will develop strong physical bodies." (Peng & Liu 2010: 552)

At the same time, the Chan School advocates the mutual improvement of the physical body and the *xin* in the embodiment of Buddhist practice. Accomplishing particular physical poses in the practice of Buddhist meditation is important in the achievement of stillness and concentration of the mind. Therefore, the Buddhist ideal and its actual effect are both spiritual and physical cultivation, with the former activating the latter. There is therefore, a special unity in mind and body.

2.5 Mind/Body Dichotomy

Having been profoundly influenced by Cartesian thought, Western scholarship on the sociology and philosophy of the body follows the longstanding mind/body dichotomy and accepts the mind as that which defines human beings. Sociologist Chris Shilling suggests that this view overlooks theorising centred on human embodiment, and argues that it would be more accurate to suggest that Western thinking is characterised by a dual approach to the body; while Western classical Sociology rarely focuses explicitly on the flesh and bones, it is concerned with the structure and functioning of societies and the nature of human action which has led to an interest in human embodiment (Shilling, 1993: 9). While there are many types of mind/body dualism in Western philosophy -Taylor (1984: 19) distinguished 8 types - the most influential is perhaps Cartesian dualism. René Descartes famously proposed that there are two fundamental kinds of substance; mental and material, and asserted that mind and matter are distinct kinds of substance. The mind, discrete from the brain, is the location of consciousness and awareness, and is thus the seat of intelligence. This results in the body and natural world being considered an object, separate from the self.

In Chinese traditional philosophy this dichotomy is completely absent[6]. The Chinese tradition is characterised by its integrity and conformity, stressing phenomena rather than structures or matter (Zhang, 2007: 384). The essence of Chinese thinking on the body (in its various and multiple manifestations) almost universally considers the mind and body as a single unit in which its functions work in harmony with each other. This is largely the result of the importance of *qi* [气] 'life force' which constitutes and flows through everything. Thus, Chinese thinking refuses a dichotomy from its very foundations and enables exploration of the body to consider corporeal concerns, as integrated with psychological, ethical, spiritual, and aesthetic ones.

6 Professor of Asian Studies at University of British Columbia, Edward Slingerland, makes an interesting case (2011, 2013) against the prevailing view that traditional Chinese philosophy is characterised by a strong 'holist' perspective in which mind-body dualism is absent (especially in ancient China). More broadly, Slingerland argues persuasively against a 'neo-Orientalist' line of thought that portrays Western philosophy as radically different to Chinese thought. While this line of argument sits uncomfortably with notion presented above; that Confucian teaching paid scant attention to the physical body, (which might suggest a mind/body dichotomy in ancient Chinese thinking akin to Cartesian dualism), Andrée Grau notes that no society ever presents a homogeneous conceptualisation of the body and space (Grau, 2011) and this can be seen in the different conceptions of the body found in the philosophical teachings from China.

The Daoist thinker Hangzi discusses the relationship between an individual's mental activities and his/her physical body in the *Xin Shu Xia* (The Art of Mind, Part Two [心術：下]). "Those who have no proper physical bodies will not obtain a clear mind, and those who suffer from the lack of vital force will fail to govern their minds. Proper physical bodies help to improve intelligence, and then all things are within the reach of the mind." It continues to highlight the effect sharp wit can have on one's physical condition; "Those who behave properly and remain peaceful in their minds will develop strong physical bodies." (in Zhang, 2007: 385).

Therefore the cultivation of *xin* (heart/mind) can make physical bodies stronger, and simultaneously hone the mind. This classic text does not make a distinction between activities that are physical and those which are spiritual or in the domain of the mind. They are simply considered different manifestations of the whole person in union. Therefore, *xīn* is central in both the physical body, and in its relation to others and society. It is concerned with both epistemology and ethics.

A Daoist principle highlighting the absence of a mind/body dichotomy, which holds the body at its centre, is the idea of internal and external elixirs. The internal elixir takes the body as a stove and an individual's *jing* [精] (the material basis of the corporeal body) and *qi* and *shen* (soul [神]) as medicines (Zhang, 2007: 392). Bai Yuchan, a dignitary of a southern Daoist section, noted that "The *xin* is the dominator of *qi*, *qi* is the root of a physical body, and meanwhile, a physical body is the carrier of *qi*, and mentality is the embodiment of the physical body" (Shi, 1977: 44410 in Zhang, 2007: 393).

This makes clear the integration of monist thinking in traditional Chinese philosophy. By contrast, Classical Western philosophy is inclined to consider the body as a closed circuit with impermeable borders. Following this understanding, we in the West tend to think of our bodies as a site of representation and expression of our 'individuality' which although housed in the mind, is illustrated through our bodies. In classical Chinese philosophy, as I have demonstrated above, the body is grounded in a social world in which the connections between people and the surrounding environment were more significant than were

individuals as impermeable, inviolable beings. These connections were articulated by the symbolism attached to substances (such as *qi*) that flowed between individual bodies and between bodies and the outside world (Brownell, 1995: 243).

2.6 Modern Conceptions of the Body in China

The Maoist Body

Anthropologist Susan Brownell (1995) writes of the 'Maoist body' as a way of illuminating the link between Mao's communist state and the body of an individual. She describes how Maoist ideology was written on the bodies of individual people and how the physical strength and fitness of discrete Chinese citizens became a problem of national significance. Brownell argues that the Maoist body culture and preoccupation with the health and wellbeing of the nation was egalitarian, militaristic and proletarian, formed in stark opposition to the body as conceived in the West, and to the Neo-Confucian late Qing (1644 – 1912) body described above.

> In the Maoist order, the body was to serve socialism primarily through labor and military service. The goal of physical culture was to promote public health, increase productivity, and prepare people for national defence. It was egalitarian in that the opportunity to train and to attain good health was available to all people (Brownell, 1995: 58)

Mao had the body as a long-term concern; the oldest surviving Maoist writing is *A study of Physical Culture* (1917). In it, Mao encourages individuals to strengthen the physical body in preparation for revolution, and highlights the importance of a fit and healthy nation as a defence strategy; "The development of our physical strength is an internal matter, a cause. If our bodies are not strong we will be afraid as soon as we see enemy soldiers, and then how can we attain our goals and make ourselves respected?" (Mao, *Tiyu* (1917), in trs. Schram, 1976[1971]: 153).

Succumbing to Western imperialism and following the Qing dynasty's defeat in the 1st Sino-Japanese war, China had lost much of her sovereignty and surrendered to colonial pressures. It was understood that this was because individual Chinese were weak, effeminate, lacking in will-power and vigour. In his 1917 article, Mao's idea that nation-wide bodily cultivation was seen as a solution to these deficiencies, as well as a method of

expunging the 'Sick Man of East Asia' label which was applied to the Chinese body by the West and Japan. Physical culture was also believed to directly complement the development of national power. Australian sociologist Patricia Uberoi (1998) argues that this line of thinking not only justified the imperialist project to itself, but also became internalised by the colonised nationalist elite, who came to see their subjugation as to some extent self-deserved, unless or until they could properly modify their bodies and once again bring glory to the nation. Mao proposed that physical education was the initial step in rehabilitation towards building a more powerful China.

The rise in interest in body culture and physical cultivation in the early work of Mao, was one aspect of a more general cultural conflict that began around 1915 called the New Culture Movement. This was an intellectual movement which viewed Confucianism as antiquated and elitist, and responsible for repressing China's development towards modernity. The movement promoted Western science and democracy, campaigned for the use of vernacular Chinese instead of traditional language in literature, criticised classical texts, and denounced Confucian ethics. The journal *New Youth* (*Xin Qing Nian* [新青年]) was started as a vehicle for the movement's new ideas. It was here that Mao's 1917 article on physical education was published. Mao and the movement attacked the Confucian ideas about the properness and gentility in stillness, and condemned the practice of quiet sitting and meditation, which had previously been viewed as the essence of a national physical culture. To the New Culture Movement, quiet sitting instilled in the participant a certain degree of passivity, and it was thought that this quality contributed to the corruption of the feudal society and the chaos in society following the 1911 revolution. In his 1917 article, Mao rejected the idea proposed by Confucian advocates of quiet sitting, that vigorous exercise would damage the health, particularly the health of women who were seen as more frail than their male counterparts.

Challenging the inequality experienced by women stemming from Chinese classical philosophy was perhaps one of the most significant changes enacted by the CCP. As discussed above, women's bodies as conceived by Chinese classical philosophy were weak and frail, and largely only valued for their reproductive and domestic labour, and role in the family structure. Mao and the CCP promoted physical cultivation for both men and women.

This, alongside other progressive policies, reassessed the frailty of women's bodies, reconceiving them as a site of social change. This was one of the most noteworthy legacies of Maoist China; an environment where women experienced greater equality than they had in Imperial China[7].

Susan Brownell suggests the prominence and potential power of the body continued to be recognised in China by Republican reformers and by the Communist Party. Brownell argues that since the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) inception, the Party has employed bodily performances to contribute towards abolishing and converting outdated thinking and creating new consciousness. Revolutionary techniques focused on the body have included class-struggle sessions, labour reform, mass calisthenics, civilian military training, widespread participation in sport, the creation of revolutionary dance and drama, and central to my discussion, the adoption of Western forms such as ballet (Brownell, 1996: 126). This bodily symbolism would perhaps not be possible without the continuation of the notion of physical cultivation contributing to moral virtue which first occurred in Chinese classical philosophy. In her ethnography of Chinese classical dance, anthropologist Emily Wilcox highlights how the Confucian and Daoist traditions of aesthetic and moral self-cultivation contributed to the adoption by Mao and other Republican thinkers of the idea that physical labour leads to personal enlightenment, as well strengthening the nation as a whole (Wilcox, 2011: v.).

It was not only the New Culture Movement that objected to the lack of attention physical culture received in Chinese Classical philosophy. The Chinese Nationalist Party also noted the problems inherent in neglecting physical culture. In the 1930 speech, Chiang Kai-shek intoned;

7 While this is generally true, there is a body of scholarship which outlines an important paradox in relation to the role of women in revolutionary China. Sociologist Kay Ann Johnson (1983) notes that while the Chinese Communist Party promoted highly progressive ideals, they did not always succeed in uprooting traditional thinking, and, in some cases, they further entrenched them. In terms of the CCP's promotion of gender equality and attack on traditional family structures, Johnson argues, "The outcome of nearly a century of upheaval and revolution, . . . born partly of widespread 'family crises' among intellectuals and peasants, has done more to restore the traditional role and structure of the family than to fundamentally reform it" (1983: 215).

> Academic education, physical education and moral education are the three basic elements needed for a nation's survival. The Chinese ignored physical education for a long time; our physical strength has diminished. Intelligence and moral standards also fall behind other countries. The central government believes that promoting sport and physical education is the only way to save the country and save the race. The objective is to build China into a world superpower and build the Chinese nation into the strongest nation (Chiang, 1930, in Lu & Hong, 2014: 45).

As in the Maoist approach, the unification of mind and body in creating a strong and vital China is stressed.

In the 1930 speech Chiang continued to explain the role of physical culture and cultivation of the body in reviving status of the Chinese nation;

> China's international status is very low. Every Chinese person feels pain and humiliation all the time. We must revive China and enhance our nation's international status. It is a shame that our country is so weak and sick in the 20th century. If the Chinese nation wants to have equal status in the world, we must promote physical, moral and academic education . . . I hope everyone in this room will give the government some suggestions on the development of sport. Only by doing so can we set China free from the hands of the imperialists . . . (Chiang, 1930, in Lu & Hong, 2014: 45)

Chiang Kai-shek also sent a telegram to address the audience and athletes prior the 4th annual National Games in Hangzhou in which he makes explicit the connection between the strength of the bodies of individuals and the strength of the nation:

> China has been a sick man for so long; individuals' physique is connected with the entire nation's destiny; young people are the backbone of the country, they should practice physical exercises regularly and train their bodies for the revival of China. Educationalists have called for the promotion of moral, intelligence and physical education. We need to be aware that physical education is the foundation for moral and intelligence education. Promoting physical education first is the basic rule . . . I hope all the athletes understand the significance of the Games and are aware that their most important mission is propagandizing and promoting sport, not winning medals (Chiang, 1930, in Lu & Hong, 2014: 45).

The emphasis on the benefits of bodily cultivation rather than the competitive aspect of the games make explicit the ideological goals of the project.

In May 1935, Chiang put this ideology into action; A 'Physical Education and Sports' department was founded and a campaign to promote mass physical exercise begun. This campaign advocated the opening up of school playgrounds to the general public, the training of more physical educationalists and general widespread participation in physical exercise, enforced, if necessary by police supervision! (Hong, 1997: 243).

Following the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Mao continued this emphasis on the cultivation of the physical body, stressing its importance as a basis for the strength of the nation. In 1952 he coined a slogan referring to the centrality of a fit and healthy body in building a strong nation; "Develop physical culture and sports, strengthen people's physiques" (Brownell, 1995: 57). Maoist body culture also aimed to level class difference in attitudes to physical exercise. This was an explicit reversal of a Chinese value system underpinning the organisation of society (inherent to Confucianism), which favoured those who laboured with their minds over those who worked with their physical strength. Engaging in body cultivation and training eradicated the privileged exemption from labour and physical exertion previously enjoyed by the feudal elites. Thus, all citizens felt ideological pressure to train their bodies, and logically, following Maoist principles, political leaders could not be exceptions. Indeed, Mao's own physical health was held up as a symbol legitimising his fitness to rule.

In 1966, at age 72 Mao swam 15 kilometres across the Yangtze River to demonstrate his physical capabilities and continuing suitability in leadership[8]. In so doing, Mao was using his physical body as a symbol of strength and continued vitality, to counteract his declining power.

We can see Maoist body culture as a form of 'somatic nationalism', a term coined by anthropologist Joseph Alter that explores the circular process by which the intersection of ideas and practices produce discourses about the culture and the body, which in turn

8 This attitude survives in contemporary politics; examples include the media attention given to French former President Nicolas Sarkozy's penchant for jogging, and the 2009 photographs of Russian Prime Minister Vladamir Putin, swimming in open waters and bare chested on horseback whilst on holiday in remote Siberia.

produce practices which stand as symbols of (although, ironically, misrepresent) the reality of culture (Alter, 2000: 118). Alter and others (Riordan, 1977; Brownell, 1995) indicate how high level bodily training in sports (or dance) have often been highlighted as ideological rhetoric in many examples of nationalism. Although specifically writing about Hindu nationalism, Alter notes how the body of the individual athlete is made into a symbol that represents their country. Their strength, energy, self-discipline, vitality and other virtuous qualities become political metaphors for the state.

The rise of such theories, as Foucault has shown, emerge contemporarily with new ways of organising and controlling society, and the institutional 'disciplining' of human bodies through emerging training practices. The construction of fit and strong bodies through a burgeoning physical culture was believed to discipline the entire society, create moral citizens, and serve as a sifting mechanism for finding those with the character to rule over others (as indicated by the importance placed on Mao's own physical fitness). This is highlighted in the 1917 article where Mao states; "The division between the strong and the weak determines the area of responsibilities each can assume" (Mao, (1917) *Tiyu* in trs. Schram, 1976 [1971]: 157).

Alter suggests that athletic or sporting bodily metaphors take many forms in ideological nationalism. He continues to argue that most begin with a broader ideological model and clumsily fit an appropriate physical activity to the political theory or cultural value; thus the activity (and associated performing body) is a pre-formed receptacle, empty of cultural meaning and significance waiting to be filled with ideology. The active body and physical culture becomes a passive tool of ideology (Alter wryly suggests Marxian gymnastics, fascist calisthenics, imperialist cricket and socialist swimming (we could add revolutionary ballet to this list) as suitable activities). He notes that this kind of relationship between ideology and the athletic body is unique to a European context because there is a Western connection made between physical culture and leisure, of being extra-curricular, something to be performed in one's spare time.

In a Chinese context, as will be discussed in greater detail in part two of the thesis, the link between physical cultural and a somatic nationalism might be a little more profound. In Mao's

1917 article he makes explicit a notion that both virtue and knowledge reside in the body. Without the physical body, Mao asserted, there would be neither virtue nor knowledge. Thus rather than the Western idea that bodily cultivation is extra-curricular, in a Chinese context, bodily virtuosity is fundamental. It not only brings strength to the individual, it also results in virtue and knowledge. After assessing the value of knowledge, Mao avoids the Cartesian legacy which influenced Western theorising on the body, asking the reader to consider wherein knowledge is contained. After noting that morality is the basis of social order and fundamental in establishing equality between ourselves and others, he suggests that;

> Physical education complements education in virtue and knowledge. Moreover, both virtue and knowledge reside in the body. Without the body there would be neither virtue nor knowledge. Those who understand this are rare. People stress either knowledge or morality. Knowledge is certainly valuable, for it distinguishes man from animals. But wherein is knowledge contained? Morality, too, is valuable; it is the basis of the social order and of equality between ourselves and others. But where does virtue reside? *It is the basis that contains knowledge and houses virtue* [emphasis in original] . . .
> If one seeks to improve one's body, other things will follow automatically. For the improvement of the body, nothing is more effective than physical education. *Physical education really occupies the first place in our lives*. *When the body is strong, then one can advance speedily in knowledge and morality, and reap far-reaching advantages* [emphasis in original]. (Mao, (1917),*Tiyu*, in trs. Schram, (1976 [1971]): 153-154).

Here Mao is stressing the link between a healthy physical body with virtue and morality. In Mao's preposition for China, physical cultivation and practice are inherently interrelated with the cultivation of morality. Emily Wilcox notes that during the Mao era, dancers in China received a high social status, which mirrored the special importance that bodily virtuosity held in political ideology and Maoist body politics. Dancers were Model Citizens because they embodied elements of revolutionary culture and ideology and inspired others to strive for physical, and by extension, moral cultivation. They are embodiments of somatic nationalism.

Cultivation of the body under Mao suggested not only physical and mental strength but also an ability to transcend the everyday bodily desires of the undisciplined, and to endure sacrifice and hardship to demonstrate a heartfelt commitment to the revolutionary cause.

This was done not only through physical training but also through tolerating physical hardship.

In his 1917 article, Mao asserts;

> Physical education not only harmonizes the emotions, it also strengthens the will. The great utility of physical education lies precisely in this. The principal aim of physical education is military heroism. Such objects of military heroism as courage, dauntlessness, audacity, and perseverance are all matters of will. Let me explain this with an example. To wash our feet in ice water makes us acquire courage and dauntlessness, as well as audacity. In general, any form of exercise, if pursued continuously will help to train us in perseverance (Mao, (1917) *Tiyu*, in trs. Schram (1976[1971]): 157).

Mao was also serious about the necessity of enduring his own physical hardship to strengthen the character;

> In the winter holidays, we tramped through the fields, up and down mountains, along city walls, and across the streams and rivers. If it rained we took off our shirts and called it a rain bath. When the sun was hot we also doffed shirts and called it a sun bath. In the spring winds we shouted that this was a new sport called 'wind-bathing'. We slept in the open when frost was already falling and even in November swam in the cold rivers. All this went on under the title of 'body training' (Snow, 1937:172-173 in Uberoi, 1998: 120)

Brownell (1995) and Wilcox (2011) note how athletes and dancers respectively spoke of their ability to 'eat bitterness and endure hard labor' (*chi ku nai lao* [吃苦耐劳]) (Brownell, 1995: 197) through their training and physical cultivation of the body which made them stronger than 'ordinary people' (*chang ren* [常人])(Wilcox, 2011: 4).

Historian Yinghong Cheng (2009) highlights how training the physical body becomes a central ideology of many communist nations in his study of China, Cuba and the Soviet Union. In a form of somatic nationalism, Cheng notes that these regimes cultivated revolutionary consciousness.

The Maoist Model Citizens were those who embodied the ideals of the 'New Man' under communism. In the Soviet Union, the new man (and woman) were products which grew out

of the conditions of the new society that communism offered. The New Man was self-sacrificing, knowledgeable, fit and healthy and motivated to actively engage with the socialist revolution. His individual behaviour was consistent with the revolutionary cause, which required intellectualism and hard discipline. The New Man was not driven by crude impulses, but instead by a conscious self-mastery (Overy, 2004: 258-9). As a result, communist regimes, Maoism included, valorised the physical labour and training.

Both Sociologist Patricia Uberoi and Mao scholar, Stuart Schram have respectively identified a degree of contradiction in the Maoist approach to body culture. In the 1917 study of physical education, Mao highlights the primary importance of self-discipline, rather than discipline imposed by others. He stresses that the cultivation of a strong and healthy body is a matter for the individual, of "self-consciousness", "perseverance" and "concentration"; "*when we speak of physical education, we should begin with individual initiative* [emphasis in original]" (Mao, (1917) *Tiyu* in trs. Schram (1967 [1971]): 155). This emphasis on the individual's initiative within the overarching structural/institutional discourse of Maoist ideology, one of self-discipline and regulation, can be usefully compared to Foucault's notion that the individual self-regulates their behaviour within structure of the institution, and wilfully submits to the disciplinary techniques enacted on themselves in the creation of the docile body established in the previous chapter. Mao suggests that "unremitting" exercise should be taken twice daily, and approached with full concentration. Physical training for Mao at this point, is an individualist doctrine; one that is self-imposed, self-directed and self-monitored. This ideology appears at odds with later Maoist programs which require the disciplining of the individual body by others, such as compulsory mass physical training in schools, the highly regulated and disciplined physical training for elite dancers and athletes in state run schools, and the authority over a group needed to coordinate impressive displays of mass calisthenics. Writing about China's National Games, Susan Brownell notes that like in the Soviet Union, mass calisthenics in China, "visually represented the militaristic, egalitarian, and collective body culture of the Maoist era" (Brownell, 1995: 314). She observes that the displays often had revolutionary themes with acts titled accordingly, for example the 1965 act called, "Tightly Grip the Gun in your Hand" (ibid). The disciplined organisation of large groups of people in order to realise such acts of

somatic nationalism, appears to run counter to the self-discipline in physical training Mao suggested in 1917.

Chinese American anthropologist Everette Yuehong Zhang (2005) discusses sexuality and ownership of the body in Maoist China. He recalls the regulations against student relationships during his undergraduate study in China arguing that the severity of guidelines and sanctions on individual behaviour also had an effect on group behaviour. In restricting sexuality, there was clear claim on individual bodies, as well as the aggregate effect on collective bodies from the centre of power. Zhang notes how this could be seen in the everyday language of the Maoist period, and points to a common slogan which read, 'My life belongs to the Party [我的生命是属于党的]' (Zhang, 2005: 6).

Zhang notes another slogan of this type which read 'My mother only gives my body, but the glory of the Party shines through my heart' [我妈妈只赋予我的身体，党的光辉却照耀我的心]. Zhang suggests that the ideology which underpins this moto acknowledges the physical body resulting from reproduction, but proposes that it is under the control of the heart. The heart is showered with the Party's glory, which symbolises a total subjugation of the body by the Party, of the individual by the group, through the ambiguous category of the heart (*xin*). Here the advantageous position afforded the 'heart' in relation to the body ironically resembles the privileged position of the mind over the body in the dichotomous Western thinking on the body. The difference between the privileging of the heart over the body in the former, and the privileging of the mind over the body in the latter, lies in the concentration of power and ownership in the hands of the ultimate authority — the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Mao. This discourse of sacrificing one's life for the revolutionary cause, or to actualise the goals of communism, is underpinned by the idea that an individual revolutionary subject does not own his or her body (Zhang, 2005: 6).

This kind of thinking is demonstrated very clearly in the famous Lei Feng metaphor. Although accounts of his life are heavily disputed, Lei Feng (1940 -1962) is celebrated for his selflessness, modesty and dedication as a soldier in the People's Liberation Army. Lei Feng was heralded as a Model Citizen and others were encouraged to emulate his altruism, self-

sacrifice and devotion to Mao and the revolutionary cause. He became the subject of a national propaganda campaign in 1963. The discourse of self-sacrifice for a larger whole; the importance of being a cog in a big revolutionary machine, illustrates the relationship of the individual's body and their own perception of it, to the revolutionary collective body of the nation state as well as the fluidity in ownership of body. In the above examples, the individual body is subsumed into the collective body of the state.

This understanding, however, conflicts with the agency afforded in the individualistic doctrine found in earlier Maoist ideas about the body and physical cultivation. By contrast, the "cog in the machine" body is the passive object of external discipline. As noted above, the early Maoist approach sits in line with Foucauldian thinking about disciplinary techniques and the training of docile bodies, as well as the importance of self-regulation in facilitating social control. This is also, to some extent, mirrored in the disciplinary techniques imposed by tightly mechanised institutions, in, for example, the widespread prevalence of propaganda and use of Model Citizens to access the mind of the individual. Thus the Maoist body is at once the passive object of external discipline, and the focus of internal self-discipline, commitment and monitoring promoted by Mao in relation to physical education. Schram (1976 [1971]) notes this contradiction in Mao's writing; the emphasis on individual self-consciousness and self-discipline seems inconsistent with Mao's proven ability to discipline others and organise large groups of people. He highlights the weight Mao gives to individual agency imploring "conscious action as opposed to a mere mechanical execution of orders" (Schram, 1976 [1971]: 23) as contradicting the organisation Mao exhibits, as well as the paternalistic doctrine of selfless devotion and absolute commitment to the party.

> For half a century Mao has been torn by the conflict between an ideal of spontaneity and the will to impose the discipline necessary for effective action. This contradiction still [i.e. in 1969] persists in the China of the Red Guards (Schram, 1976 [1971]: 23)

The various formulations and approaches to the actual implementation of physical cultivation, body culture and somatic nationalism may appear contradictory, but the intention to control the body, and its practice both physically and ideologically, remains the same. There is a single discourse of benefits to both the individual and to the nation in the

Maoist body, despite the different types of understanding of bodily discipline inherent in the somatic theories of a single individual. Furthermore, this is just one manifestation of many occurrences throughout history of what might be considered somatic nationalism***s***.

2.7 Influence and legacy of Chinese Classical Philosophy on Modern Chinese Body Culture

In China the body's shaping by society is illustrated through embodied everyday practices, and simultaneously mediated by wider historical - cultural traditions including Chinese classical philosophy, medicine (based in Daoist philosophy) and politics. This chapter has investigated the modes of mediation focusing on ideologies central to ancient Chinese thinking and modern political policies, with the aim of examining how the body has been conceptualised to explore the tensions at the convergence of the individual and society. All of these conceptions exist in some form to a greater or lesser extent, in the way the body is created and considered in ballet when it is performed by dancers who were enculturated in China.

Taking a syncretic 'three teachings' (*san jiao* [三教]) approach, this chapter focused on Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism) as the doctrines most characteristic of Chinese classical philosophy. Chinese philosophy incorporates socio-ethical-political-religious systems of thought which has influenced the conceptualisations of the body greatly. The domination of Confucian thinking means it is perhaps the most prominent philosophy contributing to ideas of the body. The Confucian principle of *li* is the observance of propriety, rituals and etiquette dictated by the strict social hierarchy. *Li* is a bodily performance in interaction with people, nature and material objects, and illustrative of the interaction between individuals and society. *Li* is embodied through both the corporeal manipulation of symbols as well as in the symbolic manipulation of the body.

The Confucian and Daoist principle of *qi* also makes a significant contribution to the Chinese conception of the body in classical thinking. Chinese thinking integrates the individual and the cosmos and everything it contains through the connecting substances (*qi* or *dao*) that flow between them. *Qi* enables exploration of the body by considering corporeal concerns, as integrated with psychological, ethical, spiritual, and aesthetic ones. This discussion is illustrative of the integration of mind and body in traditional Chinese philosophy.

Conversely, Western philosophy and the body project in sociology, considers the individual body as a closed circuit with impermeable borders. This individualistic understanding, lends itself to Western thinking of bodies as a site of representation and expression separate from, although formed in relation to, the expression of other bodies in the world. In classical Chinese philosophy, the body is formed in a social world in which the connections between people and the surrounding environment were more important than were individuals as impermeable, inviolable beings. These connections were articulated by the symbolism attached to substances (such as *qi*) that flowed between individual bodies and between bodies and the outside world (Brownell, 1995: 243).

In modern China some beliefs from Chinese classical philosophy still exist in an altered form, and have contributed to, conceptions of the body as mediation through the communist state. Much modern Nationalist and Maoist writing on the body is focused on the physical cultivation of individuals in order to strengthen the state. Ideology was written on the bodies of individual people and the physical strength and fitness of discrete Chinese citizens became a problem of national significance. Maoist body culture and preoccupation with the health and wellbeing of the nation was egalitarian, militaristic and proletarian, and connected with virtue and morality, and formed in opposition to the body as conceived in the West, and to the Neo-Confucian body proposed by Chinese classical philosophy.

Physical cultivation embodied the ideology of revolutionary culture and inspired others to strive for physical, and by extension, moral cultivation. Using Alster's conception to understand the interplay between the individual's body and the nation state; those with bodily virtuosity in Maoist China are embodiments of somatic nationalism. This connection between bodily cultivation, political ideology and the state, will be explored in greater detail in chapter four in a discussion of ballet during the cultural revolution, and again revisited in a different context in chapter seven when describing the dancer as a national symbol in international ballet competitions. This chapter has established that ballet as it is institutionalised and practised in China, sits at the convergence of Western conceptions of the body central to the genre's historic formulation and the technique itself, with the conceptions of the body found in Chinese philosophy, culture and history.

PART TWO

CHAPTER THREE: 3.1 The Evolution of Ballet in China PART ONE.

Part two of the thesis discusses the adoption and evolution of ballet in China. In order to examine the balletic body as a cultural-historical site, a clear understanding of the mechanisms by which ballet evolved in the socio-cultural political environment of China is necessary. The period examined is one that is characterised by substantial socio-political upheaval. This is, of course, reflected, and in some instances, generated, in and by dance and other artistic practices more generally. The systematic developments in dance in this time reflected social, ideological and political upheaval which spread all over China. In this chapter I endeavour to highlight not only the large systematic, institutional and political developments, but also the experiences of the individuals who make up these systems and the effects the developments had on the bodies and lives of the dancers themselves.

China has a history of ballet which spans over one hundred years, however its widespread, institutional adoption is relatively younger. The evolution of ballet in China could reasonably be divided into four periods which are characterized by distinct developments and influences which are broadly and specifically reflective of the socio-political culture of the time. These are: early twentieth century ballet, the Sino-Soviet collaborative period, the revolutionary period, and the Reform and Open era[9]. These periods are by no means discrete entities. The evolution of any kind of culture is fluid, and cannot easily be considered as moving in a solely linear fashion. There are definite overlaps in time, social and political events, and influences. Organising the evolution in this manner attempts to highlight trends which appeared over the different stages of the development of ballet, and make manageable a series of many disparate events. This chapter broadly documents the development of ballet in a chronological manner from its very beginnings in the early

9 In perhaps the most relevant contribution to the field, De-Hai Cheng's ([unpublished PhD thesis], 2000) exploration of the creation and evolvement of Chinese ballet Cheng's begins with the founding of the Beijing Dance School. He therefore divides ballet into three periods; 'the Sino-Russian collaborative period', 'the revolutionary period' and 'reforms and open period'. While it might seem that Cheng is neglecting many years of ballet in China prior to this, it might be problematic to call early ballet in China 'Chinese ballet', because it appears there only little engagement from Chinese citizens. Nevertheless, ballet performance and teaching did occur in mainland China earlier that the mid -50s, thus it seems worthy of discussion. It is also likely that given the number of opportunities to study ballet in China at this time, it is likely that there might have a been a small number of native Chinese students.

twentieth century (the late Qing dynasty) to the dissolution of the relationship between the Soviet Union and China in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It foregrounds the early pioneers of the genre in China, and highlights their contributions to the establishment of the form. The chapter continues to describe the policies proposed by the CCP which led to the state sponsored systematic adoption of ballet in China, and the earliest endeavours of a state ballet school overseen by experts from the Soviet Union. It establishes how ballet in China in its institutional beginnings is Soviet in nature, in both training methods and in the repertoire performed. This is useful to determine because it makes clear the processes by which ballet evolved from Soviet beginnings to became indigenized in China, which will be discussed in fuller detail in chapters four and five. These periods are discussed in such depth because in contrast to the wealth of scholarship on the history of European ballet, there is relatively little English language scholarship on ballet in China. A full discussion of the introduction and evolution in ballet in China makes a useful contribution to the dance literature. The revolutionary period, including the Cultural Revolution, and the later 'Reform and Open' era will be discussed in the next chapters.

Early twentieth century Ballet in China

Unlike in Europe, ballet in China is a relatively young practice. Intentionally and systematically established in Beijing in 1954 with the founding of the Beijing Dance School, ballet was actually introduced to China much earlier. While foreign powers had long identified Shanghai's strategic geographic location, following the defeat of the Qing dynasty by the British Empire in the First Opium War (1839 - 1842), the Chinese were forced to sign the first 'unequal treaty', the Treaty of Nanking (1842). Under the treaty, Hong Kong was ceded to the British and Shanghai and four other port cities opened to foreign trade. Consequently, the British established settlements in Shanghai, and were quickly followed by the Americans and the French. Originally the foreign concessions in Shanghai remained Chinese sovereign territory, however, during the Small Sword Society uprising[10] in 1853-55,

10 The Small Swords was one of a number of rebel groups to try to take power in Shanghai during the Taiping Rebellion. The group were opposed to both Buddhism and Daoism. In the early 1850s the group invaded the Chinese city of Shanghai, although they avoided the foreign concessions. They are responsible for much of the traditional *shikumen* lane-style housing still found in the city.

the Qing government conceded sovereignty in the concessions to the foreign powers in exchange for their support to repress the rebellion. From the mid-nineteenth century to the early 1940s when Japan took over the international settlements, the concessions in Shanghai were filled with Western style buildings, a British tram system, and 60, 000 white European occupants (Rattini, 2006).

The Paris of the East, was, in its heyday, the cultural centre of Asia. Shanghai had the strongest business, greatest architecture, and a flourishing art and entertainment scene. As a result, a great many white Russians fleeing the Russian Revolution settled in Shanghai. The largest foreign diaspora there were as many as 25,000 Russians living in Shanghai in 1937 (Newham, 2005). Amongst them, was Vera Volkova (1905 - 1975). Deciding to pursue ballet training at the rather late age of fifteen, Volkova trained at The School of Russian taught by dance critic and director, Akim Volynsky (1865 - 1926) as well as undergoing some training with Agrippina Vaganova. Volkova danced briefly between 1925 and 1929 with GATOB (Gosudarstvenniy Akademicheskiy Teatr Operi I Baleta -later becoming the Kirov), she subsequently joined a touring group and danced across Japan and China finally stopping in Shanghai. In 1929, she defected to China. Hoping to join the Ballet Russes, she opted to remain in China upon hearing of Diaghilev's death. There she became part of a cabaret act in one of Shanghai's opulent theatres. The Russian community enjoyed good amateur theatre, dramatic societies, concerts, and ballet performances. Anna Pavolva performed in Shanghai 1922, and there were other performances by Ballet Russes ballerinas E. Bobinina and N. Koevnikova (Ristaino, 2001).

In Shanghai Volkova joined forces with former Bolshoi dancer George Goncharov (1904 - 1954), where the pair performed regularly (with former Bolshoi dancer George Toropov) and began teaching lessons. Two of their most successful students included June Brae (nee Bear (1917 - 2000)) and Margot Fonteyn (nee Peggy Hookham (1919 - 1921)). The two ambitious students, unchallenged by undisciplined group classes, had private lessons from Goncharov in the Bear's living room, accompanied by a tinny piano. Chinese newspaper reports indicate that Hookham was involved in amateur performances in Shanghai and Tianjin, as the clipping below (i.) from *The China Press*, 31st May 1931 illustrates.

AS "DRAGON SPRITE".—Veronica Clifton and Peggy Hookham as they appear at the concert of the Royal Society of St. George recently.—*S.M.L. Sanzetti.*

Eventually Brae moved to London to receive more formal ballet training, leaving Hookham without a place to hold her lessons, and consequently, she returned to London in 1933. In 1934 Fonteyn was taken into the Vic-Wells school and noticed by Ninette de Valois as "the little Chinese girl" (Daneman, 2004: 58).

Also in Shanghai at this period were other, less distinguished Russian émigré ballet teachers. These included George Toropov, Edouard Elirov and husband and wife teaching partnership the Sukolskis. In 1934, Nikolai Sokolski, a student of Diahilev's, founded the Russian Ballet Association in Shanghai. The Russian Ballet Association performed and toured all over the world until 1953. Dancers performing in the company in China included the students of Massine, Fokine and Andreeva. Chinese dancers such as Hu Rongrong, Ding Ning, Qu Hao and Wang Kefen all graduated from Sokolski's school. In 1922 Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova (1881 -1931) danced the 'Dying Swan' solo in a Western concession in Shanghai. It is unlikely that many Chinese saw this performance. However, Florence Ayscough, a wealthy

American poet, Sinologist and early feminist in Shanghai, privately paid for Pavlova to perform for a group of Chinese schoolchildren (Shen, 2012: 42).

It was not only Shanghai where one could find ballet in China. Following the Russian Revolution many of those fleeing east settled in the newly built city of Harbin in Manchuria. Harbin was for all intents and purposes a Russia city outside of Russia proper, with between 100, 000 - 200,000 Russian immigrants in 1922. Only 11.5 % of the population was born in Harbin (Bakich, 2000). There were many private ballet schools in Harbin, as there were in another city with large Russian population, Tianjin. There is little literature about these private schools, but it is likely that they mirror the experience documented by Fonteyn in Shanghai where the classes were largely or exclusively made up of European ex-patriots.

One example of a Chinese dancer stands in opposition to this. Yu Rongling 裕容齡 (ca. 1888-1973), was the fifth and youngest child of Yu Geng, the Qing Minister to France. Living in Paris, Yu, aged around fourteen, sought instruction between 1901 and 1903 in 'Greek dance' from a twenty-three year old Isadora Duncan. Duncan was just beginning her experiment in natural movement, inspired by the classical Greek arts, folk dances, social dances and natural forces. Yu Rongling and her sister Deling were Duncan's only Chinese students. Although not training in ballet, the young women were being educated by Duncan in a Western dance practice, underpinned by Western ideas about the body and its place in art. As Manchu girls, Rongling and Deling were not permitted to have their feet bound as was the practice amongst elite women from other groups. On the first day of class, with more than twenty other potential students, Duncan picked Rongling out in the first round. Duncan commented that despite her troublesome financial situation, she was willing to teach the Yu sisters for free in private lessons (as opposed to much larger classes offered to other students (Yu, 1958:45, in Ma, 2015: 49). Rongling was taller, more willowy and more conventionally beautiful than her sister (ibid), so it was her that went on to perform Duncan's work semi-publicly in salons for small audiences. Although less extensive than her training with Duncan, Yu Rongling also had some training in ballet and Japanese dance (Yu, 1958: 45, Ma, 2015: 75). After returning to China, she performed Duncan's dances, ballet and Japanese dance at court. Yu was adored by Empress Dowager Cixi (慈禧) and made to

stay at the court where her mastery of foreign languages, manners and culture was useful. Audiovisual materials from the Seely G. Mudd Manuscript Archive show Yu Rongling dancing in China in 1926.By inviting the Yu sisters to act as Ladies in Waiting, Cixi was inviting the cosmopolitan West into her old-world Imperial China palace. Unfortunately, shortly after Yu's return, China was in turmoil with the Chinese Revolution and the overthrow of the Qing government, and as such, the Western dance introduced by Yu was not furthered.

Yu Rongling is a particularly interesting case in the history of dance in China. Up until this point in Western Europe, classical ballet was the only dance which could have been conceived of as a legitimate form of serious art. Even ballet did not have an easy relationship with legitimacy. Duncan (and others such as Loie Fuller and Genevive Stebbins) was instrumental in creating and legitimizing a new genre, separate from the theatrics of vaudeville. She was fundamental in drawing together strands of the cultural zeitgeist to create a space, develop an audience and legitimize a new form of dance as art.

Moreover, when ballet and modern dance were first arriving in China, dance had not formed a distinctive or legitimate identity as an independent art form. Of course, dance for the Chinese had identities in other guises: folk, social and popular dance all served their different functions. American scholars Shih- Ming Li Chang and Lynn E. Frederiksen, and Dallas McCurley note that in the early dynasties in China such as Shang (ca 1600 – 1045 BCE) and Zhou (1045 – 221 BCE) there were spectator-oriented performance modes for the pleasure of an Emperor. These Chinese examples differ from the spectator-oriented performances in classical ballet, where, from the outset, European Royalty was dancing, whereas Chinese Royalty was not (Chang & Frederiksen, 2016: 63). But European dance as art arrived in China at a time where there were no training institutions or native audiences. Chinese dancers such as Yu Rongling were the first Chinese to conceive of dance as art, as Duncan had done in Europe, and as such play an important role in the systematic adoption of Western dance-art in China.

Following Yu Rongling there was another woman of Chinese descent who was essential to the development on Western dance forms in China. Pioneer and 'Mother of Chinese Dance' Dai Ailian (1916 - 2006) was born in Trinidad to Chinese plantation owners. She received her

initial ballet training amongst white, English girls in Trinidad, and in the early 1930s, she moved to London to train under Anton Dolin (1904- 1983) and amongst the cream of London's dancers under Marie Rambert (1888 - 1982) and Margaret Craske (1892 - 1990). It was under Craske where Dai began studying the fundamental theories of the great Italian pedagogue Maestro Enrico Cecchetti. Of Craske's Cecchetti classes Dai commented, "They made me feel so light. I felt I was walking on clouds as I left her lessons. I've never had that feeling from other teachers' classes … the classes were so scientifically structured that they made me feel my body was totally liberated" (in Glasstone, 2007: 8). The Cecchetti technique she learnt from Craske would form the basis of her teaching for the next 60 years.

It was also in London where Dai also discovered a love of German expressionist dance, in particular the work of Mary Wigman (1886 - 1973). Initially Dai struggled in this training. She found her classical ballet foundation incompatible with modern dance, and was asked to leave one of the few classes in expressionist dance in London run by Lesley Burrows-Goossen. Unperturbed, Dai continued to perform her barefoot dancing with Ernst and Lotte Berk. In 1935, Dai accepted a full scholarship to the newly founded Dartington Hall to study with Kurt Jooss (1901 – 1979) who had fled the tightening grip of the Nazis in Germany.

In 1941, after a period of time in Hong Kong, Dai and her husband, artist Ye Qian Yu, moved to Chongqing, Sichuan province. Here, Dai taught dance at the National Opera School and the National Institute for Social Education. British dance teacher and historian, Richard Glasstone (2007) notes in his biography of Dai Ailian, that she even taught some ballet classes. Several of her students went on to teach dance themselves. Dai also choreographed and performed, with partner Peng Song (who went on to become a distinguished Professor of Dance at the Beijing Dance Academy). These works, although not strictly ballet, '[were] rooted in the basics of ballet technique, but enriched through her experience of Central European modern dance and informed by the grim realities of life in a war zone [during the Japanese invasion of Chongqing]' (Glasstone, 2007:27). Glasstone also notes that Dai occasionally danced short ballet solos in her performances, and was concerned with continuing her ballet training in China. She exchanged teaching Chinese folk dance lessons, for her own classical ballet classes in Shanghai.

Dai can be credited with the first Chinese ballet choreography prior to the systematic introduction of ballet in China. Madam Dai in collaboration with Ouyang Yuqiang [欧阳予倩] (1889 – 1962), a prominent Kunqu (oldest extant form of Chinese opera) performer, and several other artists, choreographed *Doves of Peace* (1950) performed in Shanghai. Reviews of the work by pioneering scholar and critic of Asian theatre, Englishman A. C. Scott, suggest that the work was a mixture of classical ballet and the work of Kurt Jooss. There were elements of *yangge* folk dance and music. The themes of the piece reflected the political situation at the start of the Korean War. This can be thought of the very earliest beginnings of the indigenization of classical ballet in China. Although this was likely to help the work appeal to Chinese audiences, the fusion of different dance forms and the native theme of the work are methods of indigenization which continued to be employed, albeit more systematically, later in ballet's evolution during the revolutionary period (discussed in greater detail in the next chapter).

If Dai is considered the mother of Chinese dance, then Wu Xiaobang ((1906 – 1995) [吴晓邦]) is considered the father of Chinese dance. Wu was born in Taicang city, Jiangsu province in 1906, the final few years of Imperial China. He was heavily influenced by the May Fourth New Culture Movement in his teenage years, and by Chinese Marxist – Leninism and the goals of Sun Yat – sen at university. Wu adopted Xiaobang as his final stage name because it sounds similar to the Polish pianist and composer 'Chopin', whom Wu admired for both his compositional skill and his patriotism. This choice of name also perhaps suggests that in this pre-Mao period, at least amongst the educated elite in cosmopolitan Shanghai, there was interest in Western culture and artistic forms. This perhaps demonstrates that there might have been an environment in which classical ballet could thrive.

Following his father's wishes to take over the family business, Wu travelled to Japan to study economics in 1929. During his studies, Wu watched a performance called *A Host of Ghosts* (1937) performed by students depicting the struggles of ordinary people in society. This performance inspired him to change the focus of his studies from economics to dance. During this period, Wu lived in Japan studying classical ballet at the Takada Mosao Dance Institute, where he watched performances by Japanese dance master Ishii Baku (1886 –

1962) and met Korean dancer Ch'oe Sung-hui (1911 – 1969 [崔承希]). Although primarily interested in ballet in this period, the modern dance he saw in the performances of these pioneers would influence his later development in modern dance in China.

Following the 'September 18 Incident' in 1931 precipitating the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, Wu returned to China and opened a dance school in Shanghai. No Chinese man had taught this type of new theatre dance before, and the school soon met bankruptcy. He decided to return to Japan and continue his training with Takada. Mrs. Takada, a ballet teacher, had studied in Paris with Isadora Duncan, and emphasized Duncan's natural philosophy and personal expression in her ballet teaching. In 1935, Wu returned to Shanghai and founded the Xiaobang Dance Institute following these principles. The following year, Wu put on a recital dancing to the music of Chopin. He sold only a single ticket to a Polish lady, and this disappointment, occasioned a third and final period of training in Japan. On this trip, Wu encountered Mary Wigman's expressionistic modern dance at the Eguchi Takaya and Misako Miya Modern Dance Institute. This began his career as the founder of Chinese Modern dance.

As with Dai, Wu's work was influenced by the political situation in China. The first generation of Western style dancers and choreographers in China used their new weapon to mount a national campaign against the Japanese invasion of China, or, later, to further the revolutionary cause.

Wu stated "I experienced the May Fourth movement, it was a great and thorough movement that awakened the sleeping people, and opened our eyes. It was the most significant moment in my entire political and artistic life. To see such new and innovative performing arts being performed is such a wonderful and exciting experience" (Wu, 1984:24 in Li, [translation Li] 2016 [unpublished dissertation]).

> I introduced modern dance to China because I wanted to use this new style to expose the evils of the feudal system. New dance is a new language without sound, it is a very vivid language and it can be used to mobilize and encourage the ordinary people. Like a wild storm, it can flare up the anger in

> people's heart and it will sweep away those obstacles: old thoughts, old belief, old customs and old power that stand in the way of science and democracy (Wu, 1979 in Yu, 2004: 19, [in Chinese] translated in Zheng, 2009: 186)

The rhetoric and spirit of the New Culture Movement which asserted that what made China vulnerable to imperialist aggression was a loyalty to its age-old culture, was found in the Chinese introduction of ballet and modern dance to China. While ballet was considered an historical and traditional art form in the West, it was used as a tool by Wu and his fellow compatriot artists to promote new ideologies. Chinese dance historian Yu Ping (in Zheng, 2009: 186) found two major themes in the choreography presented in this time: enlightenment and patriotism. Wu and Dai brought ballet and modern dance performances to young urban Chinese and enjoyed patronage from wartime leaders such as Madam San Yun-sen. We can see this use of new art forms to promote ideological rhetoric as another of the modes by which ballet became increasingly indigenized in China.

The early link between Western dance forms and political ideology, was solidified during the Yan'an Rectification Movement. Taking place on a communist base in a remote and mountainous area of Northern Shaanxi, this was the first ideological movement initiated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The rectification movement took place between 1942 – 1944 following the communists' Long March. Here radical intellectuals and artists hammered out strategy and waited for their opportunity to battle for China.

In the 'Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art' (*Yan'an Wen Yi Zuotanhui* [延安文艺座谈会]) (2nd May 1942) Mao spoke about the need for a cultural army wielding pens and brushes in addition to an army brandishing guns, through which to serve the revolutionary cause. Making two significant propositions in relation to art, Mao firstly asserted, that all art should reflect the life of the working class and consider the masses as an audience for the reception of art work. Art should serve politics and, more specifically, the advancement of socialism.

> They [the proletariat] have remolded themselves in struggles or are doing so, and our literature and art should depict this process. . . . Our writings should help them unite, to make

> progress, to press ahead with one heart and mind, to discard what is backward and develop what is revolutionary, and should certainly not do the opposite (Mao, 1942: 440).

In making these propositions, Mao made artists the soldiers of the CCP, fundamental to a large propaganda machine revolutionising the proletariat. When we consider this proposal alongside Mao's earlier call for bodily cultivation and virtuosity, then dancers, artists who labour with their bodies, are the ideal soldiers to embody these Maoist ideologies. Wu, Dai and the other artists targeted in this speech, often had studied abroad, and lived in cosmopolitan cities such as Shanghai. Their exposure to Western artistic forms (often classical in nature – as evidenced by Wu's chosen name, 'Xiaobang' mirroring the pronunciation of 'Chopin') taught them little about class struggle or the oppression of women relevant to their Chinese context. Neither was this struggle represented in traditional Chinese artistic heritage (Zheng, 2009). Thus, literature and art were bourgeois in nature, a fact that Mao heavily criticized. Instead Mao suggested that art workers must live side by side with their labouring audiences, to fully understand and in some cases, even embody, their struggle:

> Our literary and art workers must undertake and finish the task of shifting their stand; they must gradually move over to the side of the workers, peasants and soldiers, that is the side of the proletariat, through the process of going into their midst and their practical struggles, and through a process of learning from Marxism and society. Only in this way can we have literature and art that are truly for the workers, peasants and soldiers, a true proletarian literature and art. Communist literature and art must serve the interest of the labouring people (Mao, 1942: 442).

Art in China was recreated with this idea, and became a powerful revolutionary weapon, especially with the production of explicitly propaganda arts during the Cultural Revolution. A second point proposed in Mao's speech was particularly important for the formal introduction of ballet in China. He suggested that Chinese artists would be foolish to reject the legacies of art and culture created by foreign nations. However, he noted that in learning from other cultures, artists must ensure that they are made relevant for the Chinese people.

> . . . [W]e must on no account reject the legacies of the ancients and the foreigners or refuse to learn from them . . . But taking over legacies and using them as examples must never replace your own creative work; nothing can do that. Uncritical translation or copying from the ancients and the foreigners is the most sterile and harmful dogmatism in literature and art. (Mao, 1942: 470).

In the speech, Mao asserted that in literature and art the Chinese people must "take over all the fine things in our literary and artistic heritage, critically assimilate whatever is beneficial, and use them as examples when we create works out of the literary and artistic raw materials in the life of the people of our own time and place" (Mao, 1942: 469). As such, the collision of the ideologies in these two Maoist proposals – for art to embody proletarian concerns, at the same time as critically assimilating foreign legacies of artistic practice - was fundamental in consciously introducing institutionalized ballet (a genre deemed 'beneficial') to China.

It is most definitely true that all art, to some extent, reflects the culture of the context of its production, and as such, takes inspiration from the stuff of life. There is a strange irony that the genres chosen by the Chinese communist party in order to reflect the lives of the proletariat and further their anti-bourgeois and anti-imperialist agendas, were at their core essentially bourgeois and imperialist. Ballet which had traditionally told tales of Prince and Princesses, reflected the (imagined) harmony of Imperial palaces, and aesthetics of the noble classes, would be reinvented to bear the hallmark of class struggle in a modern republic far from its birthplace.

3.2 Sino-Russian Collaborative Period

While there was very little understanding of Western classical ballet by the average Chinese citizen in the middle of the twentieth century, ordinary people held much enthusiasm for dance in general. Chinese work units (*danwei* [单位]) in factories, agricultural co-operatives and industrial complexes had their own dance units. The military (The People's Liberation Army, PLA) also had their own training school and a performing dance troupe founded in 1953. There were several important dance institutions in Beijing at this time, including the Central Song and Dance Troupe, the All- Army Song and Dance Troupe, the Beijing Military

Area Song and Dance Troupe, the Youth Art Theatre Dance Team (Wilcox, 2011), however none of these Chinese institutions taught ballet. 2nd July 1949 saw the birth of the Chinese Dancers' Association (CDA). Dai Ailian was the first chairperson and Wu Xiaobang, Deputy Chairperson. A one year Dancer's Training Workshop run by Wu opened at the Central Drama College in Beijing.

In 1949, on the 28th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao published an article entitled, 'On the People's Democratic Dictatorship'. In it, Mao publicly pledged fierce loyalty to the Soviet Union. Mao persuasively proposed the concept of "leaning on side" (*yi bian dao* [一边倒]), to the side of the Soviet Union and the socialist camp it led. By this phrase, Mao was suggesting an oath of allegiance. Furthermore, in this paper Mao proposed a policy to "learn from the Soviet Union" (*xuexi Sulian* [学习苏联]). 14th February 1950, the 'Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance' was signed between China and Soviet Union implementing reciprocal loyalty and cooperation. The treaty called for 20,000 Chinese to be sent to the USSR for training in a variety of fields and for 10,000 Soviet experts to advise and train in China (Pepper, 1996) including six ballet experts (Cheng, 2000). This new position of Soviet loyalty was put into action alongside the earlier policy proposed by Mao. As a result of the 'leaning on side' policy, these ballet masters from the Soviet Union were brought to China to teach a new generation of Chinese classical ballet dancers. There was political significance attached to ballet during the signing of the treaty. Mao, and Premiere of the PRC Zhou Enlai, were offered the opportunity to watch two Soviet ballets during their visit to the Soviet Union in February 1950. The first ballet proposed was a Soviet ballet with modern revolutionary themes, *The Red Poppy* (1927). However, this ballet, with its portrayal of Chinese dancers in yellow paint (akin to blackface), and great-power chauvinism, was deemed offensive by the Chinese dignitaries. Instead, the day before the signing of the treaty, Mao and Zhou watched a performance of *Swan Lake*. The performance was well-received and Mao commented that the female dancers *en pointe* were particularly impressive (Henzig, 2004: 364).

In 1953 a project initiated by Ouyang Tuqian, then the President of the Central Drama Academy, founded a research group led by Korean dance teacher Ch'oe Sung-hui, and Director of the Central Drama Academy Theatre Troupe Dance Team, Ye Ning (b. 1919) [叶宁]. This research, considered the first exploration into what would later become Chinese Classical Dance *gudianwu,* was exploring Chinese Opera *xiqu* training. During this investigation, the Ministry of Culture asked Ye Ning to host a Soviet ballet expert from the Moscow Dance Academy called O. A. Yealina. Yealina was taken to watch performances and observe training methods and facilities at the most important dance institutions in Beijing. Pleased with what she saw, Yealina commented that "China was entirely capable of establishing a dance school". Following this the Ministry of Culture established the Beijing Dance School in early 1954 (Li et al, 2004: 8, in Wilcox, 2011: 171).

Wilcox (2011) notes that Wu Xiaobang was critical of the decision to place Soviet ballet teachers in positions of leadership. Wu had lobbied for the establishment of a state sponsored and organised professional dance school in China, but he was critical of too much interference by the Soviet experts, expressing that Chinese forms should be developed by Chinese artists, and as such, was one of few critical voices at this time of significant Soviet involvement in the arts. The Soviet National Folk Dance Company led by Igor Moiseyev toured China in 1954 to much acclaim. The company gave performances in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Shenyang, Fushun, Lushen, Dalian and Anshan. The Chinese Ministry of Culture organised a party of Chinese dancers and teachers to accompany Moiseyev's tour and observe not only the technique and training methods, but also the logistics of running a performing and touring company. During this tour, Moiseyev was invited by the Chinese to give a series of lectures on choreography. These were later compiled and edited by the Chinese Dance Research Society into a book entitled *On Folk Dance* (1955). Later that year, 365 performers from the Soviet National Moscow Music College visited China and put on productions of *Swan Lake* and *Notre-Dame de Paris.* February 1954 saw dance teachers being recruited to begin preparations for the new Beijing Dance School which was to open in September that year. Yealina was invited to hold the Teachers' Training Seminar in Beijing and went about establishing a curriculum. In the first year, the school recruited approximately 200 students of different ages to enter each year

of a six year course (Interview with Peter Shi, 2016, Manager of International Production and Touring and former Director's Assistant, National Ballet of China). In 1954, Dai Ailian who had previously held posts as the Head of Dance in the Arts Department of North China University and of the Central Song and Folk Dance Ensemble, was appointed to the important new position of the Principal of the Beijing Dance School (Glasstone, 2007).

The audition process held for the school was rigorous. Choosing the most suitable students for an entirely state funded school was of paramount importance. The school's newly appointed faculty went all over China in search of suitable recruits. Informing primary schools of the opening of a new specialist school, local provincial school teachers would gather suitable candidates on the days of audition for physical exams. Many of my interviewees recalled the same experience in being assessed for physical proportions. Madam Zhao Ruheng (b. 1944[赵汝蘅]), former Principal dancer and Director of the National Ballet of China from 1994 – 2009, recalled the specifics of the perfect proportions from her audition in Tianjin, aged 10, for the second cohort at the Beijing Dance School in 1955. The children were required to have 'three longs and one small'; long arms and legs, a long neck, and a small face and head. Legs had to be ten inches longer than the length of the torso, with an arm-span longer than their full height. The children were also stretched by the Soviet teachers, and examined for flexibility in the hip joint to facilitate the necessary turn out, as well as in the ankles and feet. This was especially important in the female students who would be required to stand *en pointe*. All students illustrated the length of their Achilles tendons, by demonstrating a deep *demi plie*. Students also had to show natural *ballon* and elevation, by jumping on the spot as high as they could. In addition, the students had to be deemed physically attractive and have a suitably polite and enthusiastic manner (Zhao, 2016: interview). A more detailed examination of the body in relation to the audition criteria for state sponsored ballet schools will be discussed in chapter four.

On passing this first stage, the faculty from the Beijing Dance School invited those who had passed the rigorous physical exam to attend a series of formal dance auditions in Beijing. This week long audition consisted of daily morning ballet class, and academic examinations in Chinese, mathematics and political ideas after lunch. The first cohort filling all six years in

the programme were selected from all over China from approximately 50, 000 applicants who auditioned for places in this new school (Zou, 2003, [unpublished thesis]).

The school occupied purpose built facilities in the Xuanwu district of Beijing. The school complex occupied several buildings: one for dance classes, a building for academic classes, office buildings, dormitories and a refectory. The government funded all aspects of a student's tuition and living costs. They were provided with ballet shoes and practice clothes. Unless a student's family lived locally, all students stayed at the school, returning home once or twice a year depending on the distanced lived from the school and each family's personal circumstances. Coming from a poor family in Tianjin, Zhao Ruheng noted that being at the school afforded her relative comfort and stability in knowing that she would receive regular meals to eat. She recalled feeling lucky that she was given an egg every morning for breakfast, and sometimes even, butter for her bread. Madam Zhao commented that she and her peers were treated like 'Royalty in a land of peasants' (贫穷土地上的贵族 [*pin qiong tu di shang de gui zu*]) (interview, 2016). Given Mao's proposal at the Yan'an forum that artists should live hand and in hand with the common man and experience his struggle, it is ironic that his chosen dance workers should experience privilege unavailable to the masses. It is clear that there was some conflict between the lived reality for ordinary citizens and the enactment of ideology for Mao's cultural workers. Although shown more starkly than in this Chinese example, the special treatment of the gifted children mirrors the experiences of the young girls and boys training at the Imperial Ballet School in St Petersburg. Russian ballerina and teacher of Rudolf Nureyev, Elena Konstantinova Voitovitch recalled as a student being dressed in fur lined capes and transported through the cold winter nights in carriages to perform at the Mariinsky theatre (Kavangh, 2007). Madam Zhao also noted that the Soviet teachers in China, following the style of prestigious dancers in Russia, were considered by the Chinese students as particularly glamourous. "I remember the first time I saw Russian teachers. I was so impressed by their beautiful outfits, the tutus and silk stockings" (Zhao in Chen, 2013, *China Daily* [online]).

The Beijing Dance School offered training in four main areas: ballet, Western (Soviet) style character dance, Chinese folk and ethnic dance and the newly created Chinese classical dance (*Zhongguo gudianwu*). The ballet and character dance followed closely the curriculum

used at the Vaganova Academy of Russian Ballet in St Petersburg (known then as the Leningrad State Choreographic Institute) as implemented by the Russian teachers in Beijing. It followed the well-known and systematic Vaganova training method, as taught by distinguished pedagogue Agrippina Vaganova (1879 – 1951). In 1957 a group of Soviet ballet teachers were invited to teach and stage ballets from the Soviet repertoire. This group was led by Pytor Gustev (a friend of Balanchine and former director of the Kirov Theatre in St. Petersburg) and Victor Ivanovish Tcaplin (from the Bolshoi in Moscow). Other experts included character dance taught by Tamara Leisovich Nicolai Sebrenikov (also from St. Petersburg) teaching *pas de deux* (Cheng, 2000). The Chinese folk and ethnic dance and Chinese classical dance curricula were developed hastily by Chinese teachers in only five months prior to the opening of the school[11]. All students at the school were required to undergo 'basic training', studying all styles of dance for the first three years of the programme. At the end of the third year, students were divided by their teachers, according to their ability and physical suitability, into different majors for more specialised training in a specific genre.

In September 1957, the Beijing Dance School decided to increase the specialism offer in the training. This would mean a division between what was increasingly considered as incompatibility between ballet training and the Chinese dance training. Creating two disciplinary streams (which would now be considered different majors) afforded the students more specialised training in either 'Chinese National Dance Drama' or 'European Ballet Dance Drama' (Wilcox, 2011: 175) preparing them for a specialised performing career. However, it is interesting to note that the decision to increase specialisation and focus in the training was implemented two years prior to the first established ballet company in China, suggesting a longer term plan to have ballet dancers specifically to join a national company once founded, and to increase the standards of the dancers who would perform in it. Liu Qingtang is a strong example of the increased specialisation of the training. He had additional focused tuition in partnering as such, became a specialist pas de deux teacher, and instrumental in choreographing the pas de deux in *The Red Detachment of Women* (Roberts, 2009: 2).

11 For more on the development of the Chinese classical dance (*Zhongguo gudianwu*) curriculum, and the criticisms of the training methods implicated, see Wilcox, 2011.

In 1959 the Beijing Dance School hired a teacher whose training, although based in an Imperial Russian style, was different to that of her Soviet colleagues. Shi Sheng Fang (b. 1935 in Magelang, Indonesia) studied ballet at the Legat School in Kent and joined the Legat Dancing Group. She toured Europe with the group and also performed in her native Indonesia. She later returned to England to study at the Royal Academy of Music and then travelled to China and joined the ballet faculty at the Beijing Dance School.

The curricula at the Beijing Dance School were not limited to the training of dancers. From 1955 – 1957 and 1958 – 1959 there were two cohorts of Chinese dancers, teachers and choreographers trained by Soviet ballet dancers and choreographers on the Training Programme of Dance Drama Choreography at the Beijing Dance School. More than forty alumni choreographers, following the Soviet model of dividing the teaching of performance and choreography, we trained in in the latter on specialised courses with an explicit emphasis on choreography (Wang and Long, *Zhongguo jinxiandai dangdai wudao fazhanshi* (1840-1996), 210 in Ma, 2015: 223). These formally trained choreographers were to become the backbone of choreography courses all over China.

In 1958, only four years after the founding of the first ballet training school, young Chinese students were afforded the opportunity to perform Russian classics under the instruction of the Russian teachers, most significantly Pytor Gusev. Gusev decided that *La Fille Mal Gardée* was a suitable ballet for the novice students to perform. Later, Premiere Zhou Enlai, who had seen a performance of *Swan Lake* in the Soviet Union, asked Gusev, "How long will it take you to be ready to stage a performance of *Swan Lake*?" (Glasstone, 2007: 48). He was told by Gusev it would take five years, but in fact, it took only four. Dai Ailian recalled that "Gusev was a slave driver" (ibid) but an interview with Madam Zhao suggested Gusev's interpreter was even worse (Gusev taught entirely in Russian and had all his classes and rehearsals interpreted) (Zhao, 2106: interview).

"At that time, the costume, light and stage art of 'Swan Lake' were totally new to me. Even I had never watched the original movie of Swan Lake." (Bai, in Zhang, 2011). There were challenges beyond the dancers and production team too. The Chinese audiences were

unfamiliar with performances where the dancers wore such little clothing, and touched and embraced one another freely. For many Chinese this was considered indecent. This cultural unfamiliarity was not only amongst the uneducated Chinese. When members of the CCP visited the Soviet Union and were taken to watch a performance of *Swan Lake*, Mao's personal secretary Chen Boda (1904 – 1989 [陈伯达]) was offended that all the female dancers performed "naked" (Heinzig, 2004:364). This unease with the physical body mirror Dai Ailian's experiences when she first arrived in London to train in 1930. One of six pupils taking class in Anton Dolin's private studio in Chelsea. Dai, a young dancer herself, familiar with the physicality of classical ballet, notes her discomfort at seeing other dancers in little clothing. On first seeing Dolin perform, "I got the giggles. I saw my teacher dancing in his underwear. I had never seen tights before.'' (Dai in Kisselgoff, 1984)

This perception of immorality demonstrates how Western attitudes towards the conception and presentation of the body in art are imbedded in classical ballet itself. The dancing body is both constitutive and representative of ideology, but is mediated in performance by historical and cultural traditions in society. Nudity or scant clothing has a long lineage in Western art, with images of the human figure being reflective of nature and human beauty. Images of nude dancers, athletes and warriors have been used to express the vitality of human life and energy. In classical ballet, little clothing serves the functional purpose of showcasing the lines of the dancers; the lines in still position and movement themselves reflective of Western ideals in art and architecture relating to the Golden Ratio in Classical design. These attitudes to the body, beauty and art are renegotiated when ballet in shifted to a new location. In consciously adopting classical ballet, Chinese audiences had to also consciously learn to some extent, how to read the conception of the body inherent to the art form, in addition to creating new meaning in light of its resituation / reconceptualisation. For the Chinese dancers in the ballet itself, this was an explicit part of learning the repertoire. "It [was] Pyotr Gusev that led us into the pure art world and instructed us how to be concentrated on creating characters and presenting the beauty." (ibid). Gusev used the preparations for *Swan Lake* in order to train the Chinese choreographers and teachers. Li Chenxiang, Wang Shiqi, Li Chenlian, Zhang Xu, and Wu Fukang all took part in choreographing and rehearsing some sections of the work. Glasstone (2007) notes that

during the rehearsals for *Swan Lake*, the male students, still very inexperienced in classical ballet, were struggling with some of the more technically difficult elements of the solos and the lifts in the pas de deux. Gusev chose Liu Qingtang, a dancer with very little ballet training, but strong enough to lift the ballerina to play the Prince. Gusev also decided to omit the male solos from the ballet in light of Liu's inexperience.

On 1st of July 1958, the students of Beijing Dance Academy premiered *Swan Lake* in Tianqiao Theatre in Beijing after only four months of rehearsal. The Tchaikovsky score was performed by the symphony orchestra of the Central Newsreel and Documentary Film Studio under Chang Ning-ho (1958, *Beijing Review,* [online]). Bai Shu Xiang (b. 1939 [白淑湘] in Liaoning Province), danced the role of Odette/Odile after she had been in ballet training for only four years, aged 18. When Bai started learning the role, she could turn only eight of the required thirty two *fouettes* in the third act of the ballet. She also sustained several serious injuries and underwent painkilling injections to continue her training. Despite Bai's naiveté and short rehearsal period, her performance was a success. Premier Zhou Enlai praised Bai, "It's not easy for you to be able to perform the dance drama in such a short time. I heard that you had a hard time practising and I hope you will become a master in this field!" (Zhang, 2011, [online]).

The performances of a classic such as *Swan Lake* by the students at the Beijing Dance School is symbolic because of the status afforded the ballet as a masterpiece of the Russian canon. However, it is also strategic in its function to cultivate bodily virtuosity in the dancers. The full length, large scale production is technically challenging, requiring bravura performances, as well as great strength and stamina.

This performance of *Swan Lake* in China is a tidy example of the way in which the body of the dancer becomes an instance of symbolic significance, in both her immediate environment and nationally. The bodily virtuosity of Bai and her fellow dancers operates on multiple levels. Following the Bourdieusian analysis introduced in the first chapter, it is clear that the investment of the Chinese and Soviet government in terms of economic capital, as well as social and political capital are literally written onto the body of the dancer in her training and performance. Her selection from thousands of children, and the investment in

expert knowledge make her obligation to succeed even more poignant. Bai assumes those symbolic and no doubt, literal pressures, and must overcome the fragility and weakness in her body in order to bring status to her teachers at the Beijing Dance School, and more generally to bring prestige to the nation, demonstrating China's power and cultural sensitivity in cultivating such a performance in only four years. The acknowledgment by Zhou Enlai of Bai's triumph despite the physical difficulty in injury and pain sustained in rehearsal, provides a discourse that proposes that success is even sweeter if the process of achieving it is difficult. It also suggests that the individual suffering of the dancer is insignificant if the performance success has wider reaching symbolism. This is reflective of the Maoist idea identified in the previous chapter that enduring hardship might be necessary for the cultivation of virtue. Furthermore, it validates the state sponsoring of the formal introduction of ballet to China, and China embracing Western dance as part of her artistic heritage.

On 31st December 1959, the year following the success of the first performance of *Swan Lake* in Shanghai, the Experimental Ballet Troupe of the Beijing Dance School (the forerunner to the Central/National Ballet of China) was created. Dancers from the Beijing Dance School were selected to join this performing company. It was here that the choreography class from the school created some of the first Chinese ballets. *The Mermaid*[12][13] [鱼美人] (1959), was collectively choreographed by the students in the second cohort of the choreography class. The creators used *Swan Lake* as a model in producing the work. It is for this reason that it is often described as 'China's Swan Lake' (Yu, 2004: 72). Although not the first Chinese dance drama combining ballet and Chinese classical dance (*The Precious [Magic] Lotus Lantern* was the first attempt in 1955 by the first cohort from the Beijing Dance School), *The Mermaid*, is considered the most successful work of this kind in the period discussed. *The Precious Lotus Lantern* fused an episode from Beijing Opera, with ballet and Chinese dance movements. It was performed to a score which made use of Chinese instruments by Zhang Xiao Hu. In 1955 it was performed in the Bolshoi Theatre and

12 This account is compiled from secondary sources about the ballet as there is no digital recording of *The Mermaid* available.

13 Many sources translate the title of the ballet from the Chinese 鱼美人 as 'The Maid of the Sea' or 'Maiden of the Sea'.

in 1959 at the Novosibirsk Theatre (further demonstrating the link between Soviet Union and China). However it was criticised within China for following the Soviet structural model too closely, and the balletic elements are less prominent than in *The Mermaid*. The work was selected to be performed in the national ceremonies held to commemorate the Tenth Anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1st 1959 in Tiananmen Square. This ceremony was performed for an audience of 700, 000 including Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi (who gave the key note address), the mayor of Beijing, Pen Zhen, and General Secretary, Deng Xiaoping.

The role of the mermaid was performed by Chen Ailian (b. 1939). Chen was selected from an orphanage in Shanghai in 1952 to become a member of the Experimental Ballet Troupe (Jiao, 2003: 157). *The Mermaid* was a dance drama which combined ballet technique in the lead role, with elements of Chinese classical dance as a corps de ballet or chorus. The work demonstrates that ballet was critically assimilated from the Soviet style and processes of indigenizing the form were happening in even the earliest attempts at Chinese choreography. An English language review from 1958 highlights the significance of the work for developing uniquely Chinese ballets:

> Ballet is a comparatively new branch of the theatrical arts in China. In addition to studying and producing Western ballets, its Chinese devotees are doing a great deal of experimental work aiming to produce a type of ballet that is basically national in style, while assimilating certain of the fine elements of the Western ballet and dances of other countries. Among the efforts made in this direction are The *Magic Lotus Lantern*, produced last year by the Central Experimental Opera Theatre of Peking, and *The Immortals and Red Clouds*, produced respectively by the cultural troupes of the Shenyang and Canton units of the People's Liberation Army. But these were more dance-dramas than ballets; except in the first, mime predominated over dance. *The Maid of the Sea* marks a great advance on all of these in dancing, choreography and music, as well as in decor and unity of style; it has carried the Chinese ballet to a higher level of artistry (Chang, 1959, *Beijing Review* [online])

The Mermaid, from a Chinese folk tale, told the story of a mermaid's love for a brave, young hunter. They dream of a life together, but are hindered by a demon who wants the beautiful mermaid as his own wife. Together, they overcome many challenges to live happily united. Chang notes that the three different settings in the ballet: an underwater world, the world of men, and the dark world of the damned, use the different dance genres to suggest different theatrical settings. This is further accentuated by the score by Wu Zuqiang and Du Mingxin, two young teachers from the Central Conservatory of Music, which integrated Western classical music, with Chinese folk and popular music.

Chang states that unlike previous attempts at Chinese ballet, *The Mermaid* was not overly reliant on mime to express the thoughts and feelings of the characters. He recalls animated folk dance from the Yi and Hopei minority groups, and dance from the people of the coast of Shandong province. These are combined with ballet danced *en pointe* and lyrical romantic *pas de deux* performed by the mermaid and the hunter.

In discussing the success and indigenization of the work Chang concludes:

> Chinese ballet is still in its infancy. A good beginning has been made, but it is still far from perfection as an artistic form. Many more attempts will undoubtedly be made to create a form of national ballet that combines all the best elements in classical Chinese and folk dances with those of other schools. In this respect, Maid of the Sea is a good and successful effort in the right direction, and this is in a large measure due to the choreographers' faithfulness to the principle of telling the story and developing characterization through the dance. . .
>
> These are encouraging and assuring signs that, inspired by the Communist Party's policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom, and weeding through the old to let the new emerge," Chinese ballet will surely develop and reach maturity in the near future. (Chang, 1959, *Beijing Review* [online])

However, *The Mermaid* was received less enthusiastically by some Chinese experts. Dance critic Shao Fu, suggested that *The Mermaid* was little but a poor imitation of *Swan Lake*, and lacked substantial 'Chinese spirit'. Shao suggested that the characters in the ballet makes little sense to ordinary Chinese people as they "lack Chinese values, logic and morality"

(1994:93 in Cheng, 2000: 17). There were further criticisms of *The Mermaid* on the grounds that it is difficult to replicate "Chinese psychology, morality, and values" (Wong, 1989: 10 in Cheng, 2000: 18) using the codified structures and "courtly manners" (ibid) of European ballets, thus suggesting that Chinese ballet might instead use structures from Chinese operas.

Despite some criticism, *The Mermaid* is an important step in the creation of a distinctively Chinese ballet. A full -length evening work, it uses the Soviet *drambalet* model to tell a Chinese fable, danced to a score which combined Chinese and Western music. The dancing was performed to a high level by a group of well-trained dancers with training in ballet and Chinese classical dance. Different dance genres were brought together skilfully and made use of dance movement, rather than mime to advance the narrative. Experiments such as this ballet paved the way for the revolutionary model works made during the Cultural Revolution that are still being performed by prestigious companies in China and around the world. It represented an effort in the pre-Cultural Revolution era to adopt many elements of Soviet ballet, reconceiving of them as a means to represent a truly new and distinctively Chinese art form.

In 1960, following the success of the Beijing Dance School, and at order of Premiere Zhou Enlai, the government created a second professional dance school, outside of the country's capital in Shanghai. The Shanghai Dance School again followed the Soviet model overseen by Pytor Gusev. Premiere Zhou selected seven Chinese teachers who had trained at the Beijing Dance School, as well as a couple of teachers from the Shanghai Opera Theatre as the faculty of the new school in Shanghai. As a result of the rapid pace of development in Beijing, and the success of *Swan Lake* after only four years of establishment, the school hoped to accelerate the training and have suitable students ready to join a company in just three years. In an interview with Ling Gui Ming (b. 1943[淩桂明]), former dancer in Shanghai Ballet, Principal of Shanghai Dance School and Chairman of the Shanghai Dancers' Association, told of how he was accepted into the school aged seventeen (much later than is common in ballet training) and selected because he was tall, fit and physically strong, so would be able to progress at ballet, ready to graduate age twenty as a professional dancer. It was considered expedient to select slightly more mature students for training, as they

would not be hindered by slowly developing physicalities. Younger students were selected to fill the first and second grades, but students joining the third year were between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. 150 students were selected in total. At the same time, the Beijing Dance School had 340 students (Snow, 1972: 195). Ling also suggested that the school preferred students whose parents were ordinary workers, rather than members of an elite or educated class (Ling, 2016: Interview).

The Shanghai Dance School followed a very similar curriculum as the Beijing Dance School, with all students training in ballet, Western folk dance, Chinese folk (ethnic) dance and Chinese classical dance (*zhongguo gudianwu*). After receiving an initial three years of training, it was clear to the staff and students that this was not sufficient to create dancers of a professional standard, and Ling and his peers received a further three years of specialist training. There were some students in this first cohort at the Shanghai Dance School who after three years of training showed very little potential to succeed as professional dancers. This group who did not have professional dance in their futures, were given jobs in other related fields, such as lighting and set design, costume and pointe shoe making (Ling, 2016: interview).

Between 1957 and 1960 Chinese audiences had the opportunity to see ballet from international companies touring China. The Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre (Siberia) brought *Giselle* and *Don Quixote* to China in 1957. In return The Experimental Ballet Troupe of the Beijing Dance School, staged *The Precious Lotus Lantern* in the Soviet Union at the Novosibirsk Theatre in 1959. There were also tours from companies with looser ties to the Soviet Union. In 1957 Ballet Rambert, toured China (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Wuhan, Hangzhou, and Nanjing) performing *Giselle*, *Coppelia*, Sir Frederick Ashton's *Façade* (1931), Walter Gore's *Winter Night* (1948) and Robert Joffrey's *Pas des Déesses* (1954). The company also made studio recordings of *Les Sylphides* (1909) and Anthony Tudor's *Gala Performance* (1938) with introductions to the company and works in Mandarin Chinese (Rambert Archival Film, film photography Edmée Wood). Ballet Rambert were the first Western ballet company to perform a full tour of China. The selection of works by Ashton and Tudor performed in China highlights the links between the training Dai Ailian had under Rambert where Ashton and Tudor where her classmates. One of the performances in Beijing

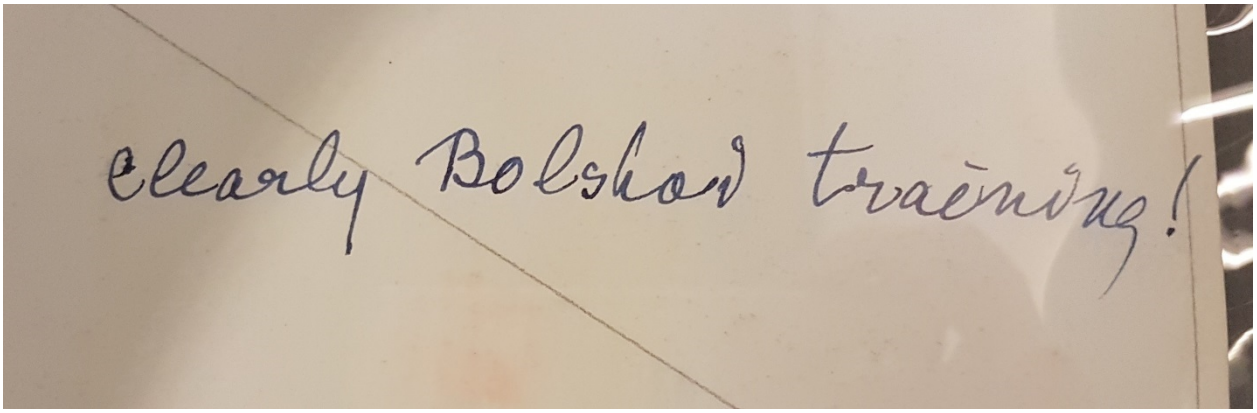
was for important Chinese and foreign delegations in an Army theatre. According to a review by critic David Ellis, *Giselle* and *Coppelia* were well received by the audiences, whereas the more modern work *Winter Night* was less popular (Ellis, 1958, Rambert Company Archive Review). There was overlap between the two international companies performing in Beijing, with Rambert giving a performance for 170 artists of the Novosibirsk Ballet. The Soviet dancers and technicians were particularly interested in Giselle, in addition to the Strand Electrical Equipment and pointe shoes worn by the British dancers which the company planned to copy. This passing along of technical skill from the West to the Soviet companies and then to the Chinese dancers, teachers and craftsmen is demonstrative of the internationality and reciprocal relationships built into the fabric of Chinese ballet from its very beginnings.

The choice to bring Tudor's *Gala Performance* to China is an interesting one. The work satirises the pretentious grand Imperial Russian ballets of the 1800s. It opens on a backstage scene. The dancers, ballet master, conductor and wardrobe personnel are engaging in last minute preparations for a Gala Performance. Three Principal ballerina (La Reine de la Danse (from Moscow), La Déesse de la Danse (from Milan) and La Fille de Terpsichore (from Paris)) attempt to outdo the others with virtuoso and humorous performances. These stereotypes of regional style and personality in ballet in different locations in Europe are illustrative of the 'style wars' which were prominent during the 1930s when Tudor was training. Tudor neglects to satirise an English style of ballet which was less established in this period than it might be today (in part thanks to the choreography of Sir Frederick Ashton). In order to understand the humour in the piece one needs a contextual knowledge of ballet as it operated in Europe. This knowledge is fairly unlikely in a relatively new Chinese ballet audience. The ballet also unwittingly implicates, and pokes gentle fun at the newly established Chinese ballet institution through its satire of the Soviet style of ballet, and thus, the Chinese mimicry of the Soviet system.

During Ballet Rambert's visit to China, the company had much interaction with the flourishing dance field in China. Marie Rambert and dancers were greeted upon arrival in Beijing by Dai Ailian and members of the Beijing Experimental Ballet Troupe. Rambert was given a tour of the Beijing Dance School and upon watching ballet classes, noted "clearly

Bolshoi training". This Soviet style identified by Rambert in the photograph can be seen through the very expansive sense of *allongé* in the port de bras, the external rotation on the standing leg, and the in the alignment of the dancers positioned with a much more extreme sense of croisé than might be observed in dancers trained in other parts of Europe[14].

(ii.) Ballet class at Beijing Dance School, 1957 (taken by Marie Rambert, Rambert Dance Company Archives, © Rambert Dance Company)



14 While no system or training method of ballet can be considered 'style free', these are unique identifiable features of Soviet ballet, which are notable when compared with other methods such as the Bournonville style found in Denmark or the French School performed by the Paris Opera Ballet.

(iii.) Back of photo: “Clearly Bolshoi Training!” written by Marie Rambert after observing a dance class at Beijing Dance School.

Rambert Company also observed Chinese classical and folk dance performances by the Central Song and Dance Ensemble, and toured the famous landmarks of Beijing with dancers from the Beijing Experimental Ballet Troupe and performers with the Central Song and Dance Ensemble and Dai Ailian. The time given over to socialising between dancers of the different companies contributes to the solidification of China’s burgeoning ballet as connected to a wider globalised ballet institution.

In 1960 The Royal Swedish Ballet toured in China in 1960, dancing two ballets by George Balanchine, *Symphony in C* (1947) and *The Four Temperaments* (1946). These were well received by audiences. Maintaining the link between politics and ballet, the Premier Zhou Enlai and Vice-Premier Chen Yi attended the performances and met the company backstage (Snow, 1972:195-6). These two companies were bringing ballets danced in very different styles than had been seen in China before, and suggest that, to a limited extent, ballet in China had influences from outside the Soviet Union. Chinese dancers and choreographers from the nascent institution had very likely been exposed to works which were very different in structure and content from the Soviet ballets they were using as models from which to create new Chinese ballets.

There was further outside influence on the Beijing troupe when English ballerina Beryl Grey (b. 1927) was invited as the first Western dancer to perform with Experimental Ballet Troupe of the Beijing Dance School. Grey had been initially invited to China in 1957-8 following her performances as the first Western ballerina to dance with the Bolshoi. However, personal circumstances and the Great Chinese Famine (1959 – 1961) in China meant it was February 1964 before she embarked on her five week tour of China. Grey flew to Beijing to perform in the company’s *Swan Lake* and to dance, as well as produce, a version of *Les Sylphides* at director Dai Ailian’s request. Grey commented on how impressed she was with the skill and virtuosity she found in the Chinese dancers displayed in *Swan Lake* and how the mime scenes were danced with particular conviction (Grey, 1965:39).

Grey was less impressed with *Les Sylphides*. This ballet, bar a couple of solos, was new to the company and Grey had been asked to bring with her an orchestration for the company to dance to. She had one scored in London and brought it to Beijing. Grey staged and rehearsed the dancers in *Les Sylphide* and found she always had an audience of teachers watching in the studio as she put the dancers through their paces. She suggested that the posture of the dancers, and in particular the quality of movement and shape in the *port de bras* was not stylised enough for the romantic period of the ballet.

> [M]y mind was full of the Peking ballet dancers. I found it difficult to realise that they had been learning Western ballet for only ten years. Their dancing had a definite Soviet style to which they were already adding their own characteristics, artistry and sensitivity (Grey, 1965: 31).

Grey wrote about the similarities to the style or school of ballet she had experienced in the Soviet Union, which was particularly pronounced in long, fluid *enchaînements*. Grey also noted the beautiful proportions of the dancers, with supple backs, long, slender necks, highly arched feet and easy extensions. She commented that the dancers worked extremely hard, taking on corrections with dignity and poise. On a visit to the Beijing Dance School, Grey highlighted that the student dancers had the same well proportioned bodies. Madam Dai lamented that it would be possible to accept 200 pupils but had only 88 in 1964 because they had not been able to identify students with sufficient "talent" (Grey, 1964:56). Considering that the school accepted students largely on the basis of their physicality and suitability for dance it seems likely the school were unable to recruit to capacity because of rigid physical requirements for acceptance, rather than a lack of potential amongst thousands of school children in China. Compounding this, there was no new intake in the years 1963-64 because the school thought it wise to concentrate on the teaching methods and raising the standards of teaching amongst the young, inexperienced teachers. The teachers were doing a refresher course, with particular focus on the teaching methods employed on the first year cohort (Grey, 1965: 56).

Grey's account also contains a detailed description of the company's premises. Purpose built over five floors, the company had sixteen rehearsal rooms which were well heated and

lit. As in Soviet companies, watering cans replaced rosin more usually found in the West in ensuring the wooden floor was not too slick. Grey notes that most of the dancers lived in a dormitory building, two to a room. The dormitory contained one big concrete washroom where the dancers showered and washed their Western style practice clothes; leotards, and nylon tights. The dormitory also included a reading room and a large canteen for dining. Grey comments that the facilities were quiet and spartan, free of the luxury she had seen dancers in the Soviet Union enjoying. Grey's observation about spartan facilities reflected the ideology proposed by Mao that artists were too removed from the proletariat and should experience the struggles of the ordinary citizens.

Grey asked Dai Ailian about the pay and conditions for the dancers in the company. In 1964 a dancer in the company earned roughly 40 RMB a month. The average factory worker at the time earned 70 RMB a month. Grey writes that there were sixteen grades of salary for all artists in China, ranging from 40 RMB a month to 300. For reference, Chairman Mao was claimed to have drawn 300 RMB a month. However, only the very few most popular artists in China achieved 100 RMB a month. Grey enquired why the dancers were paid so poorly. The response she received suggested,

> [w]e do not want to spoil our dancers. The artists of the Soviet Union have been spoilt by their Government, and have grown away from the people. When they are put on a higher level and given preferential treatment, they become spoilt and lazy citizens (Ting Po in Grey, 1965: 75)

This statement echoes both of Mao's proposals in the Yan'an Forum in 1942. Mao wanted to ensure that his artists were grounded people who could empathise with the struggles of the common man. Secondly, Mao was clear that in creating new legacies of art from the West, China should not merely mimic the form, they should instead evaluate the foreign offerings and critically assimilate to suit China's purpose. Thus the poorly remunerated dancers of the Experimental Ballet Troupe both reflect an antidote to what was perceived to be decadence amongst Soviet dancers, and also ensured that the dancers remained humble and empathetic of lives of ordinary Chinese.

In addition to staging and coaching *Les Sylphides*, Grey's gave company classes. Although only teaching small groups of the leading dancers in the company (ten men and ten women), she noted some technical faults common to the whole company. Grey noted that the dancers would often forsake proper placement of the hips (lifting or 'hitching' the hip) to achieve a higher leg extension. Furthermore, as the dancers trained in the Vaganova method, which requires 180 degree external rotation 'turn out' of the legs and feet, Grey noticed that the dancer's turnout was unstable in the centre of the room, once free from the barre, and this was especially prominent when landing in *allegro*. She also highlighted the tendency for the female dancers to hyperextend their lower spine (a common fault in dancers who have very mobile backs, an attribute the Chinese dancers were selected to have).

As well as her technical observations, Grey contributed to the furthering of ballet education in other ways. She gave lecture demonstrations, "internal performances" of different solos from the classical repertoire to staff and students at the school or company. Before performing each solo, Grey spoke a little about the ballet and its story. She gave lectures on the history of ballet, "ballet as a living art; the importance of handing on its traditions" (Grey, 1965: 60), the British ballet field, and the development of ballet during the second world war. She also provided advice on the Chinese made tutus the corps de ballet wore in Swan Lake as well as their Chinese made Soviet styled pointe shoes. The Chinese made pointe shoes were stiff and noisy with deep 'V' shaped vamps. Grey left her own British made pointe shoes in varying degrees of wear for the Chinese shoe makers to deconstruct. The visit of a British ballerina to China during the early period of ballet's development in China suggests that in addition to the tremendous Soviet influence, there was also some influence from training systems and other aspects of the profession outside of that historical and stylistic legacy. Ballet in China was from its outset, an international practice.

There were also opportunities for Chinese students to train outside of China. In 1960 dancers were sent to study in the Choreography Department of the Moscow National Theatrical Institute, amongst these dancers were Jiang Zhuhuai and Li Chenxiang, who were instrumental in the development of ballet in the decade to come. However, these students were to be the last to have direct Soviet influence.

The Sino-Soviet split began in the mid-fifties and was the deterioration of political and ideological relations between China and the Soviet Union. The split derived from differences in Chinese and Soviet national interests, and from progressively divergent interpretations of Marxist – Leninism. The Soviet regime saw the possibility of peaceful coexistence with the capitalist West, however, Mao proposed to the Chinese public, intolerance towards capitalist nations. Mao rejected the idea of peaceful coexistence with capitalists which he perceived as Marxist revisionism from the Soviet Union. By 1961 the ideological differences proved irreconcilable and the CCP formally denounced the style of communism in the Soviet Union as a product of 'Revisionist Traitors', breaking the international communist movement apart (Lüthi, 2008). Shortly after this, the Soviet ballet experts and technicians, alongside masters in other fields, and Soviet loans, left China to return home. With this split, China was left with many unfinished projects, half built bridges, dams and power stations, and a young and inexperienced ballet industry. But it was the same political determinism that would keep ballet thriving in China in the difficult years to follow.

This chapter has described the evolution of ballet in China from its infancy in small pockets amongst white immigrants in urban centres, through the political policy which facilitates a state sponsored institutional adoption of the form. It has examined the beginnings of the ideological thinking which provoked a transformation of the genre along revolutionary lines following Maoist rhetoric. A fuller discussion of these changes in the revolutionary period and the methods used to indigenize ballet as a practice in China will follow in the next chapter.

(iv.) Timeline of dance events in socio-political context from the late Qing dynasty to the end of the Cultural Revolution

1839—1860 Opium Wars

1842 Hong Kong becomes British Colony

1895 Taiwan ceded Japan

1901—1903 Yu Rongling trains with Isadora Duncan in Paris

1903 Yu Rongling returns to China and performs for Empress Cixi

1906 Wu Xiaobang born in Jiangsu Province

1911 Fall of the Qing dynasty

1912 Republic of China established

1916 Dai Ailian born in Trinidad

1921 Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established

1930– 1940 Dai Ailian trains and performs in London

1935 Wu Xiaonbang founded the Xiaobang Dance Institute in Shanghai

1937 Japanese invasion of China

1941 Dai Ailian arrives in China

1942 Yan'an Forum: Mao Zedong gives talk on the role of arts in communist China

1945 Japan defeated , Taiwan returned to Chinese rule

1946—1949 Chinese civil war

1949 CCP take power and People's Republic of China founded

1949 Chinese Dancers' Association founded

1950 First full length Chinese Ballet *Doves of Peace* performed in Shanghai

1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance signed. 10,000 Soviet experts sent to China

1953 People's Liberation Army training school and troupe

1954 Beijing Dance School founded

Dai Ailian made Principal

1954 Soviet National Folk Dance Company led by Igor Moiseyev toured China

1955 *The Precious Lotus Lantern* in the Bolshoi Theatre

1958 Japan's Matsuyama company perform *The White Haired Girl* in a Chinese tour

1958—1961 The Great Leap Forward

1957 Ballet Rambert tours China

1958 Students of the Beijing Dance School performed *Swan Lake* at the Tianqiao Theatre in Beijing

1959 China's first ballet troupe at the Beijing Dance School

The Mermaid is premiered

1959—1961 the Great Chinese Famine

1960 The Shanghai Dance School was founded

1960 The Sino-Soviet Split

1964 Beryl Grey first Western dancer to perform with dance troupe in Beijing

1964 The East is Red premiered

1964 *The Red Detachment of Women* premiered at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing

1965 *The White Haired Girl* by the Shanghai Dance School choreographic group premiered in Shanghai

1966—1976 The Cultural Revolution

1974 Ballet *Ode to Yimeng Mountain* premiered

1974 Ballet *The Son and Daughters of the Grass-lands* premiered

1970 Dai Ailian sent to countryside to engage in manual labour and re-education

1976 Mao Zedong dies of Parkinson's Disease

Gang of Four arrested in bloodless coup

1976 Official end of the Cultural Revolution

CHAPTER FOUR: 4.1 Evolution of Ballet PART TWO– Revolutionary Period and the Red Detachment of Women

Political Situation

The Sino – Soviet Spilt discussed in the previous chapter was fueled by the failure of Mao's Great Leap Forward (1958 – 1961) which might be considered the early stages of the Revolutionary Period. This was a violent and disturbing period of social and political chaos in China and as such a clear understanding of the unfolding of history during this period is essential to any discussion of how ballet was shaped by, and acted as a key tool in shaping the socio-political climate of that time. Following chronologically from chapter three, this chapter will be the first part of an exploration of ballet during the revolutionary period focused on the Maoist ideology and political policy that led to the creation of revolutionary dance works. The chapter will close with an analysis of the first, and arguably most significant of the revolutionary ballets, *The Red Detachment of Women* (1967, *Hongse niang zi jun* [红色娘子军]) to examine how ballet became fully indigenized during this period, and explore how ballet can be used as a tool for state ideology. The other ballets created during this era will be examined in the subsequent chapter, which focusses on the Cultural Revolution and its end, leading to the beginning of the Reform and Open Era.

The Great Leap forward was social and economic policy proposed by the CCP, and led by Mao that aimed to rapidly transform the country from an agrarian economy into a socialist society through rapid industrialization and collectivization. In this initiative, Mao suggested that China could have an economy that would rival America's by 1988. It was the rural Chinese who felt the effects of the policy changes most fiercely. These changes included the incremental introduction of mandatory agricultural collectivism, resulting in the prohibition of private farming and the development of collective communes. The People's Commune comprised large collective units, with administrative, political and economic functions. Each commune had a small farm, consisting of 4,000 – 5,000 (up to as many as 20,000) households. By the end of 1958, 700 million people had been placed in 26,578 communes (Kraus, 1982). Those who continued private small holdings were labelled 'counter - revolutionaries' and persecuted. These restrictions on ordinary Chinese were upheld

through a combination of social pressures as well as pubic struggle sessions[15]. Dutch historian Frank Dikötter asserts that "coercion, terror and systematic violence were the foundation of the Great Leap Forward" (2010: 3).

Despite its intentions, the Great Leap Forward saw economic regression; "enormous amounts of investment produced only modest increases in production or none at all" (Perkins, 1991: 483). The massive institutional and policy changes that accompanied the Great Leap Forward were key factors in The Three Years of Great Chinese Famine (1959 – 1961), which were worsened by natural disasters. Estimates vary, but historians argue that during this period, there were between 15, 000, 000 (official Chinese government statistics) and 45, 000, 000 premature deaths (Dikötter, 2010: 316).

As a result of the famine and the shrinking economy, the Great Leap Forward was abandoned after only three years. Forced to take major responsibility for the disaster, Mao resigned as President of the People's Republic of China. More moderate members of the CCP such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping rose to prominence. Liu succeeded Mao as the President of PRC.

With Mao effectively withdrawn from economic policy making, he was able to focus his time on refining his contributions towards a vision for a unique model of Chinese Marxist – Leninism. This would bring Mao personal prestige within the party, and restore his socialist vision to China. This uniquely Chinese interpretation of Marxist – Leninism (as highlighted in the previous chapter) was a divergence from the Soviet model, and eventually forced the Sino – Soviet Split.

As well as forcing a more radical style of ideology into the party, Mao also set the scene for the Cultural Revolution by removing powerful officials who he deemed to be less than

15 A struggle session was a form of public meeting which aimed to shape public opinion, educate the proletariat, reinforce revolutionary values and action and to humiliate, persecute (and in some instances even execute) political rivals and class enemies.
16 Dikötter arrived at this statistic after being permitted special access to Chinese archival material from the period. He also suggests the use of the term 'famine' and the emphasis on natural disasters obscures the more violent and disturbing events that occurred at this time.

entirely loyal. The opaque means through which he achieved this, serves to highlight the role Mao believed that art and the media could play in political life. In some instances he wrote articles defaming politicians, however the example which reveals Mao's belief in the ideological power of art, occurred in late 1959. Historian and Beijing Deputy Mayor Wu Han ([吴晗] 1909 – 1969) published a play called *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* (1959), which tells the tale of a hard-working and honest Ming dynasty civil servant, Hai Rui, who is dismissed by the corrupt emperor. After the premiere, Mao following common critical opinion, believed that Hai Rui was an allegory for Peng Dehuai's condemnation of Mao during the 1959 Lushan Conference where Peng critiqued Mao for the failure of the Great Leap Forward. Mao was supposedly the corrupt emperor and Peng Dehuai the honest civil servant. Initially, Mao publicly praised the play, however he secretly commissioned his wife, Jiang Qing ([江青] 1914 – 1991), and a Shanghai literary critic and propagandist (later one of the Gang of Four) Yao Wenyuan ([姚文元] 1931 – 2005) to write a scathing article criticising it and the playwright. Peng later suggested that he agreed with this allegorical interpretation, stating in a letter to Mao in 1962, "I want to be a Hai Rui!" (Domes, 1985: 114-115). Following this oblique character assassination, the playwright Wu Han became one of the of the first victims of the Cultural Revolution and died in prison in 1969. Wu was just the first of many so-called "rightists" from Chinese artistic communities, where theatre institutions, ballet included, became an instrument for the Gang of Four to attack their political enemies.

There is general consensus amongst historians (Dikötter, 2016) that the Cultural Revolution began in mid-May 1966 when Beijing party officials issued the 'May 16th Notification'. This warned that the CCP had been infiltrated by counter-revolutionary 'revisionists' who were plotting to become a "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie" (May 16th Notification, in MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006: 47). A fortnight later, an article in the Party's newspaper *The People's Daily* insisted that the 'revisionists' must be removed through violent class struggle. The masses must "clear away the evil habits of the old society" by eliminating "monsters and demons" (ibid).

Chinese students rose to this call for action by founding Red Guard divisions in schools and universities across the country. Just three months later in 'Red August', Mao and his allies mobilised these young, radical Red Guards to destroy the "four olds" [四旧]: Old Customs, Old Habits, Old Culture and Old Ideas. In order to implement this ideology thought to represent imperialist aggression and capitalist exploitation, schools and universities were closed, historic relics and artefacts destroyed, cultural and religious sites as well as private homes were ransacked or demolished as the assault on 'feudal' traditions began. Millions of people were persecuted in violent struggles that ensued across the country. Ordinary people suffered public humiliation, arbitrary imprisonment, forced labour and 're-education'. Property was seized, individuals were tortured and a great many killed. People were forcibly relocated. Ethnic minority groups which had enjoyed a special protected status before the Cultural Revolution were forced to abandon any elements of minority culture which were deemed 'anti-revolutionary' and in some cases, groups were systematically tortured and killed. During the same time, Mao's personality cult grew to immense proportions.

After the initial 'red-terror' led by the Red Guards, ordinary workers joined the chaos and China was plunged into a state of near civil war with rival factions fighting all over the country. By late 1968 Mao was coming to the realisation that this revolution had spiralled out of control. He issued instructions to relocate urban youth in order to be re-educated by poor peasants. Approximately 17 million urban youths, were sent to mountainous areas or farming villages to learn from the workers and peasants during the 'Down to Countryside Movement [上山下乡运]'. Mao also ordered the army to restore order, effectively transforming China into a military dictatorship. The army ruled with an iron fist and the death toll soared.

The military rule lasted about three years, until roughly 1971 when it became clear that there were irreconcilable differences and increasingly diverging interests between the civilian and military factions of the leadership. Mao was troubled by the power and prominence of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and began scaling down their political involvement. 1972 saw a historic event with the US President Richard Nixon touring China

with hopes of re-establishing ties between Washington and Beijing. This is symbolically seen as the beginning of the end of the Cultural Revolution, and was the start of a semblance of stability and normality returning to China.

On 9th September 1976 Mao died of Parkinson's Disease aged 82. There was a week of national mourning. A month later, with the support of the army, the Gang of Four were arrested in a bloodless coup. 1976 is recorded as the official end of the Cultural Revolution. In less than a century, China had been transformed from an empire to a communist state, and its individuals from subjects to workers. The people endured unimaginable hardship and enormous change with two revolutions in under 100 years. As Turner has pointed out, the body has been a site of "national, global and democratic contests. It is the living site where the politics of identity is inscribed" (Turner, 2008 [1994]: 222). The bodies of Chinese were drastically rewritten during this period. While this is most definitely the case for all Chinese, it is perhaps most noticeable in Chinese women, whose feminized bodies in the Qing era emphasised delicacy, fragility and a primary concern with bearing life. A woman's role in society in nineteenth century Imperial China was symbolically and literally imprinted on her body through the process of footbinding to achieve the elegant 'three-inch golden lily'. Women were consciously handicapped in the name of beauty in order to secure a husband to live out their lives in the private, domestic realm. Although unclear if these were actually uttered by Mao, popular sayings in the revolutionary era heralded a new dawn for women: "Women hold up half the sky. Whatever men can accomplish, women can too" (Liu, 2015: 116). In stark contrast to Imperial China, the Maoist regime used state-derived feminism to bring about greater social equality for women. Mao, following Marx, believed women were oppressed by class inequality, and he knew that he must mobilise this great untapped source of support and labour, to fuel the revolution and his power. In this way agency becomes the monopoly of the party -state and changes in gender roles and relations are implemented in a top-down fashion; "[w]omen can be mobilized for change, but they cannot be their own agents of change" (Howell, 2001 in Zheng, 2005: 521).

Cultural anthropologist, Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (1997) highlights how during the Maoist era, and most significantly during the Cultural Revolution, over and above women entering the labour force, and consequently the public sphere, there was a state dismantling of the

individual patriarchal family unit, in favour of larger collective units (communes) as the basic unit of production and accounting. Yang suggests that in addition to greater freedom for women during this period, China also underwent 'the erasure of gender and sexuality' in the public space (1997: 41). Yang argues that although not completely erased, gender was no longer a significant marker of self-identity. She notes one important factor in erasing gender differences was the adoption of non-gendered modes of clothing forced upon women. She notes that during the Cultural Revolution women were required to wear olive green army clothing, a PLA cap, and forced to cut their hair short. Women who dressed too femininely were considered 'bourgeois' (ibid), almost suggesting that women who embodied traditional femininity were class traitors.

The phrase "iron women" (*tie gu niang* [铁姑娘]) came to signify the eradication of gender differences in Maoist China. There was a conscious state proletarianisation of all sections of population which necessitated a subsuming of feminine identity in the mass media, and in didactic art. Regardless of the specific mechanisms through which feminism was enacted[17], women's bodies were employed by the CCP and became active players in revolution. Perhaps nowhere was this active deployment of women's bodies for the revolutionary cause seen more publicly and symbolically than in the ballets of the revolutionary period.

4.2 Revolutionising Art

Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, had a life-long involvement in arts and politics. As a university student in Qingdao, she was a member of a small group of artists, writers and actors called the 'Communist Cultural Front'. She continued her involvement with the CCP and later became a professional actor staring in numerous films and plays under the stage name *Lan Ping* ('Blue Apple' [蓝苹]).

Although she was involved in the controversial secret criticism of *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* in 1959, Jiang Qing's first openly public involvement in the new direction the arts

17 It is important to note that there is much debate about the role and mechanism of feminism in Maoist politics and the Cultural Revolution, and the scope of the equality achieved. A fuller discussion of this is outside the scope of this project. For more, see Kay Ann Johnson (1983) and Wang Zheng (2005).

would take place during the revolutionary period that predates the Cultural Revolution by several years. Her first speech in all her years as the Chairman's wife, was in July 1964 at the "Forum of Theatrical Workers Participating in the Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes". In this speech Madame Mao criticised the state of opera in China as a poor reflection of contemporary revolutionary themes. She urged artists to revolutionise their art. While not specifically speaking of ballet, it is fair to extrapolate that these ideas were also applied to the creation of new revolutionary ballet in this period (this was later confirmed when two ballets became part of the Eight Model Operas classified by Madame Mao as exemplars and models of artistic creation which dominated the stages of China for more than a decade).

> It is inconceivable that, in our socialist country led by the Communist Party, the dominant position on the stage is not occupied by the workers, peasants, and soldiers, who are the real creators of history and the true masters of our country. We should create literature and art which protect our socialist economic base . . .
> Our operatic stage is occupied by emperors, princes, generals, ministers, scholars, and beauties, and, on top of these, ghosts and monsters. . . . [t]hey don't necessarily all depict the workers, peasants, and soldiers either. . . Theatres are places in which to educate the people, but at present the stage is dominated by emperors, princes, generals, ministers, scholars, and beauties by feudal and bourgeois stuff. This state of affairs cannot serve to protect but will undermine our economic base. . . . It is our view that operas on revolutionary contemporary themes must reflect real life in the fifteen years since the founding of the Chinese People's Republic, and that images of contemporary revolutionary heroes must be created on our operatic stage. This is our foremost task. (Jiang Qing, 1964, speech *On the Revolution of Opera* at the Forum of Theatrical Workers Participating in the Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes in Jiang, 1976: 119-120)

This could be considered fair criticism of classical ballet as it had been formally introduced to China via the Soviet Union. Western classical choreography typified the stages dominated by the 'Princes' and 'beauties' Madame Mao so despised. In fact, Mao's speech, despite the divergence in political implementation following the Sino-Soviet split, echoed many of the same ideological concerns about the triviality of ballet heard in Soviet Russia following the Russian Revolution.

In Moscow in 1923, the head of the musical theatre section of Glavrepertkom (a Soviet commission responsible for the approval of performers' repertoire; similar to the role that Madame Mao undertook herself in China) reported on the offerings of the most prestigious Moscow theatres:

> The ballet repertory imbues the Bolshoi Theater with all the traits of a court theater in tsarist times. There are *paysans* instead of peasants, chocolate-box "heroes," the intolerable fakery of ballet "folklore," the petty-bourgeois sentimentality of sugary romantic intrigues, and the extremely foolish, completely absurd realizations of the librettos. Princes, princesses, kings, and all sorts of devilry. Here is the tradition the academic Bolshoi Theater stubbornly maintains in the seventh year of the proletarian revolution. . . . In 1919–20 attempts (not lacking in interest) were undertaken to transform this bourgeois ballet into a sort of magnificent mass pantomime spectacle on more or less serious (often revolutionary) themes. But the Bolshoi Theater sidestepped this clearly considered proposal with Olympian indifference—and not one of such librettos found their paths to the stage of the Bolshoi Theater (Trabsky 1975: 70 in Scholl, 2004:70)

Despite the misgiving of the Soviets, much as in China, the leaders understood the potential for ballet to be used to serve a revolutionary cause. As American Professor of Russian Language, Tim Scholl (2004) has pointed out, as early as 1919, Antoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky, a Marxist revolutionary and the first Soviet People's Commissar of Education responsible for culture and education, acknowledged the potential for ballet to serve the people and the revolution, however admitted that in its current form, it was unable to do so. In 1919 Lunacharsky commented

> Ballet, as a spectacle for the people, possesses colossal strength, but for now that strength is poured into silly melodramas and monotonous pretty *pas.* The ballet doesn't knows its own strength, and doesn't wish to know it. It still trails the chains of recent slavery to a lascivious, perverted public" (1924: 83 in Scholl, 2004: 67).

He continued to believe in the potential of classical ballet for revolutionary means. In a 1925 essay entitled, *Why Should We Save The Bolshoi Theatre?* (ibid) Lunacharsky argues that the theatre should be saved because ballet contains the potential to create mass spectacles on

appropriate revolutionary themes. "The harmony and precision of ballet movements, the complete mastery over one's body, the complete mastery over the moving mass—there is the promise of the enormous role the ballet could play in the organization of such spectacles" (1964, 251). It is likely that this belief was fundamental to the systematic, conscious adoption of ballet by China during the Sino-Soviet collaborative period, and important to the vision that Madame Mao had for ballet during the Cultural Revolution.

The role that dance and performing arts could play in producing spectacles of mass movement in China was illustrated in state sponsored song and dance performance, *The East is Red* [红东方] (1964). This work was thought to be the carefully calculated manifestation of a policy Premier Zhou Enlai had proposed just a year earlier in 1963 (Chen, 1995). Zhou was thought to be using the performance to counteract some of the more extreme left-wing views about art expressed by Mao, Jiang Qing and The Gang of Four. Their rhetoric encouraged an attack of artists failing, in their view, to follow the revolutionary ideology in their work. Western art, which was seen as a symbol of colonialism and imperialism, and a tool of 'rightists', came under fierce criticism (ibid). In a speech in October 1963, Zhou Enlai spoke against an outright ban on Western art forms, instead suggesting guidelines along which art could be reformed. Zhou suggested that Western forms, ballet included, should not be discarded. He accepted that Western arts were foreign forms of expression and, thus, less accessible to the masses. However, rather than a ban, he proposed the 'Three Processes of Transformation" (*san hua* [三化]), incorporating a three-part model for socialist art; "revolutionise" (*geminghua* [革命化]), "nationalize" (*minzuhua* [民族化]), and "popularize" (*qunzhonghua* [群众化]).

Chinese American enthnomusicologist, Lei Ouyang Bryant (2007) unpicks the terms upon which the policy was based. The processional language presented a basic model which aimed to shape the ideology underpinning the creation of the artistic works of the revolutionary period. The first process, 'to revolutionise', echoes Chairman Mao's sentiments from the Yan'an Forum some twenty years earlier, about the artists working for the revolutionary cause as a cultural army; to create work which was of the revolution in content and for the revolution in function (Zhandi Xingge, 1972). The second process, 'to

nationalise' is slightly more complex than the English translation implies (see Rees, (2001), Yujiro, (2001) for how this term has been problematized by scholars). The term '*minzu'*[民族], although translated in English as 'nation', in the Chinese implies notions of both nationality and ethnicity or even race. Therefore, when applied to artistic practice in China it urges the cultural army to use the forms that speak to the understanding of the cultural heritage and traditions of the people themselves. As such, foreign influence was widely discouraged.

It could be argued that it was this idea that forced choreographers in the revolutionary period to fuse Soviet style classical ballet with elements of Chinese Classical and folk dance, and Chinese opera to create a style of Chinese ballet unique to China. The previous chapter highlighted how some of the earliest attempts at Chinese choreography using ballet were hybrid forms in this manner. These attempts could be considered the earliest stages of the indigenization of ballet, however, the political rhetoric identified here compelled a Chinese indigenization of ballet along revolutionary lines using the specific modes identified by Zhou's 'Three Processes of Transformation'. As well as appealing to the tastes and experiences of the people, this nationalizing also served a strategic function. China is a huge and diverse country both geographically and in the groups of people that inhabit the land. There are 55 ethnic minorities in China, and a great many different languages and ways of life. Using art to promote a unified vision of 'Chineseness' served to bring together different 'minority nationalities' under the concept of the nation. Much like a simplified common writing system that was central to uniting different groups and cultures politically, nationalising was important to ensure that all the workers of China, all over the country, were engaged in the revolution. Lastly, the third process, 'to popularize', had a meaning more similar to the definition of 'popular' as 'of the people' than as of a great success (although the hope was for both interpretations). Thus art in a socialist society without an intellectual, bourgeois class, must therefore, be accessible and relevant to the masses and their everyday experience. Dance works were well suited for performance all over the linguistically and culturally diverse nation because the communicative abilities of dance do not rely on language.

It was following Zhou Enlai's 'Three Processes of Transformation' rather than the more extreme Left's view of a total ban on foreign art, that allowed ballet to become modified in order to survive. Ballet was treated much like other Western arts, such as symphony orchestra (founded in Beijing in 1956, just two years after the Beijing Dance School) which had to 'nationalise', play works with 'national characteristics', as well as ensuring composers produced works which were 'locally Chinese' (Zhou, 1995: 5-6 in Yang 2016 in Buch et al, 2016: 58).

In addition to the 'Three Processes of Transformation', one of the animating principles of model operas was the theory of 'Three Prominences' (*san tuchu* [三突出]). This doctrine suggested that model works should not depict the enemy, nor Japanese invaders and avoid making the "hidden class enemies" of the [present] day appear clever or interesting. The theory stated, "Among all the characters, give prominence to the positive characters; among the positive characters, give prominence to the main heroic characters; among the heroes, give prominence to the central character." (Kraus, 2012 :157)

The East is Red (1964), was an early manifestation of these two theories (the 'Three processes of Transformation' coupled with the 'Three Prominences'), and a haven for both new and traditional arts in China to coexist, steeped in Zhou's ideology. Premier Zhou believed in the educational value of the work for both the audience and for the thousands of performers in the history and philosophy of the CCP. Labelled a 'song and dance epic', *The East is Red* included 53 numbers and eleven dances, and included more than 3,000 amateur and professional musicians and dancers. These musical numbers are threaded together by seventeen recitations with narratives that glorify the history of Chinese Communism and the leadership of Mao. Drawing on minority and Han folk dance, traditionally practiced by peasants during national festivals (such as the 'rice-sprouting' dances of Jiaozhou in Shandong, or the 'flower-drum operas' of Yunnan), the work also integrated movement from Chinese opera, Chinese classical dance and ballet. The scale of the work meant that it was not easily presented in live performance and as such, it did not become an official model work. However, the confluence of Chinese and Western dance, as well as the real-world influences from proletariat life became typical of performance during the Cultural Revolution.

In 1966, *The People's Daily* newspaper praised the efforts to follow the dictum of the CCP and their reconstruction of artistic practice, and celebrated the birth of the new model works:

> Since 1964, under the brilliant radiance of Chairman Mao's line on literature and art, the high-tide of revolutionary reforms in the fields of Beijing opera, of ballet drama and symphonic music has swelled (The People's Daily, 6th December 1966 in Bai (2010) in King et al, 2010: 188).

In May 1967, the eight 'model performances' (*yangbanxi* [样板戏]) were formally promulgated. They consisted of five modernised Peking Opera: *The Red Lantern* (1966, *hong deng ji* [红灯记]), *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (1966, *zhi qu wei hushan* [智取威虎山]), *Shajiabang* (1966 [沙家浜]), *Raid on the White-Tiger Regiment* (1966, *qixi baihutuan*, ［奇袭白虎团］) and *On the Docks* (1966, *Haigang* [海港]); two ballets: *The Red Detachment of Women* (1967, *Hongse niang zi jun*［红色娘子军]), and *The White Haired Girl* (1967, *Bai mao* nu［白毛女]) and one Western style symphony: *Shajiabang* (1965［沙家浜])[18].
An article from the government's Xinhua News Agency (*Xinhua tongxunshe*［新华通讯社]) in July 1967, two months after the official promulgation of the model theatre, demonstrated how these works embodied Maoist principles in order to set the tone for evaluation:

> The eight model plays have prominently propagated the shining Mao Zedong Thought, prominently eulogized the workers, peasants and soldiers who are the masters of history. Threading through all the plays is Chairman Mao's revolutionary line of art and literature which stresses that literature serves the workers, peasants and soldiers, as well as proletarian politics. Model theatre embodies the correct guiding principle of "letting one hundred flowers blossom" (*baihua qifang* [百花齊放]), "rejecting the old and develop the new" (*tuichen buxin* [推陈布新]), and "making the past serve the present and foreign things serve China"(*gu wei jin yong, yang wei zhong yong* [古为今用，洋为中用]) (in Bai (2010) in King et al, 2010: 188)

18 The dates here do not reflect the date of the premiere but rather the date each work was considered a suitable model of opera modernization. See Clark (2008) for a fuller exploration of this process.

In the press, the model works were praised as “shining victories” demonstrating the value of Mao’s Thought and forecasting success for the Cultural Revolution. An article published in the CCP’s political journal, *Red Flag* (*hongqi* [红旗]); journal under the nom de plume, ‘Red Town’ stated,

> The glorious achievement of revolutionary operas marked a revolution in art by the proletariat. It is the major component of our country's proletarian cultural revolution. . . . In the series of revolutionary model operas nurtured by beloved Comrade Jiang Qing, the image of proletarian heroes is established; the stage that has been controlled by landlords and representatives of the bourgeoisie for the past thousand years is now gone. The real master of history has entered the field of art and started a new era in the history of art (in Xing, 2004: 115).

For the years between 1967 and 1977, model operas were performed all over the country, and later turned into films for wider dissemination. Shown in organised screenings, in extract on communal television sets, blasted from loudspeakers in schools and factories, and sang and danced by amateur groups, the works were well received by enthusiastic audiences. During the evolution of the Cultural Revolution, the term ‘model theatre’ came to denote any opera, dance drama or ballet which illustrated the revolutionary qualities identified above, highlighted in the original eight performances. There were several more works considered ‘model theatre’; five Peking Operas including an opera version of *The Red Detachment of Women* (1972) and two further ballets, *Ode to the Yimeng Mountain* (1974, *Yimeng shan xiaodiao*[沂蒙山小调]) and *The Sons and Daughters of the Grasslands* (1974, *cao yuan er nv* [草原儿女]). The inclusion of so many ballets in the model works indicates the revolutionary potential ballet was thought to possess, and the successful indigenization of the form.

4.3 The Red Detachment of Women

As established, in the mid to late 1950s, the Beijing Dance School and Shanghai Ballet School were beginning to experiment with the creation of choreographic works which fused classical ballet with indigenous Chinese practices such as Chinese folk dance, martial arts, opera and the burgeoning Chinese classical dance. This hybridity was further elaborated in the two ballets which later became model works. Audiences in China first encountered *The*

Red Detachment of Women as a feature film released in 1961. The majority Han audience found the setting amongst minority people in the southern Hainan Island charming and somewhat exotic. Although the ballet companies were based in the capital city, Beijing, and the most Westernised city, Shanghai, ballet was relatively, if not completely unknown to the general population, even in these urban centres. Adapting two already familiar pieces into this ballet-fusion aided legibility and acceptance for the ordinary audience member all over China.

As with the modernised Peking operas, the model ballets were the product of extensive and tireless work by a team of multidisciplinary specialists. The process of research, development and rehearsal was very well resourced, with the artists also afforded time to create spectacular and polished pieces. The Red Detachment of Women was developed by the Central Ballet of China. The story itself had already achieved national success in the film directed by Xie Jin[19]. Audiences were familiar with the theme music, and with the narrative's concentration on the communist revolution, and its female protagonist – ideal for reflecting the 'three prominences'- it was the perfect subject for the making of a new, substantial, and ideologically acceptable Chinese ballet. At the beginning of 1964, the Ministry of Culture organised a Red Detachment creative group, which was based at the Central Ballet company but also included experts from folk dance (in particularly the dances of Li minority group of Hainan), martial arts, music, lighting and set, as well as the original screenwriter, Liang Xin from the earlier film.

The score was composed by Du Mingxin, Wu Zuqiang, Wang Yanqiao, Shi Wanchun and, Dai Hongchen. Du and Wu had together created the score for the earlier Chinese ballet, *The Mermaid*. The lead choreographers were a male choreographer, Li Chengxiang and, a female teacher/choreographer Jiang Zuhui, aided by Wang Xixian. The stage designer was Ma Yunhong and lighting by Liang Hongzhou.

The real unit of female soldiers upon whom the ballet is based emerged in the 1930s in Hainan, China's smallest and most southern province, a collection of tropical islands in the

19 Harris (2010) notes that at about the same time as the film there had been a regional Hainan opera form, *Qiongju*, which told the story of the local women's army unit in the Hainanese language. It was likely that this was only seen within the province, and was much less influential than the widely distributed film on the creation of the ballet version.

South China Sea. The women initially cooked food and mended uniforms for the male soldiers, but they convinced local commanders that they too could and should carry ammunition. The detachment existed for fewer than two years, but in that time, the women fought hundreds of bloody battles, often with their bare hands, in order to help Communist leaders escape the nationalists.

In order to understand and be able to portray the women soldiers, choreographer Li Chengxiang led the composer Wu Zuqiang, choreographers Jiang Zuhui and Wang Xixian, as well as leading dancers from the Central Ballet company including Bai Shuxiang (who had danced the principal role in the Beijing Dance Academy's first production of *Swan Lake*), Zhong Runliang and Liu Qingtang on a research trip to Hainan Island. They spent several weeks there, meeting the former female soldiers, observed their living and working conditions and becoming familiar with the revolutionary areas. They received strict training as the women's detachment did, shaping their bodies to forget the delicacy of their ballet training and embrace the raw physicality of soldiers.

After the visit to the warmth of Hainan, the creative group drafted a six-scene ballet and rehearsals began in May 1964. In an interview with Madam Zhao Ruheng, a principal dancer in the first cast of the Red Detachment of Women, she recalled a critique of the dancers during a dress rehearsal, "you look like ladies, not soldiers" (Zhao, 2016, interview). In response, in August 1964 the whole company went to Datong military camp in Shanxi province to train with the army. "We wore the soldier uniforms, we did everything together [with the soldiers], sleeping eating and the training; running, shooting and 'emergency call' – practicing without warning in the middle of the night, for an invasion. It was very hard. We'd learn the drills of the soldier"(ibid.). In addition to the military training, the dancers also maintained their ballet training, which they did in their army fatigues on the uneven ground outside the army camp. The dancers trained their bodies; they learnt the postures of a soldier, they improved their military bearing and were able to convincingly handle and wield weapons.

(v.) Principal dancer, and first Wu Qinghua, Bai Shuxiang, learning to shoot in Datong Military Camp, Shanxi in August 1964 (National Ballet of China Archives, © National Ballet of China).

(vi.) Taking company class in Datong Military Camp, August 1964 (National Ballet of China Archives, © National Ballet of China).

To return to the Foucauldian analysis introduced in chapter one, the use of the army training by the dance unit is interesting in order to understand the strategic deployment of dancers by the CCP during the Maoist era. In examining the Hainan Island training of the dancers, it is possible to draw striking parallels with Foucault's analysis of the creation of docile bodies outlined in *Discipline and Punish* (1979 [1975]). In Foucault's work, a

conception of the body as a central component in the operation of power relations has occupied a prominent place. By manipulating the bodies of dancers – a highly skilled group with exquisite mastery over the body – we can see how control and mobilization of the virtuosic body becomes a locus of control in a top down enactment of power. Achieving physical and mental docility in the dancers, enables the dancers to perform convincingly as actors for state ideology. In order for the dancers to become effective metaphorical foot soldiers for the revolutionary cause as well as literal soldiers in the Red Detachment, the dancers are subjected to technologies of discipline.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault comments on the training of soldiers to highlight the malleability of the body:

> The solider has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inept body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint run slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit; in short, one has 'got rid of the peasant' and given him 'the air of a soldier' (ordinance of 20 March 1764, in Foucault, 1977: 135)

Foucault continues, 'a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved. The celebrated automata … were also political puppets, small-scale models of power' (1977: 136). A docile body is a prerequisite for the mobilization and enactment of power through bodily virtuosity. Dancers are excellent candidates for this. Docile bodies are created at a young age through ballet training in state run institutions (more on this process of training in chapter six) and they are expert bodies capable of learning new skills quickly and efficiently; dancers become soldiers, performing consciously on stage, but also embodying unconsciously the ideology of the CCP as part Foucault's conception of discipline. Foucault recognized this function of the docility acquired through specificity and discipline in all aspects of training stating, 'discipline 'makes' individuals; it is a specific technique of a power that regards individuals as both as objects and as instruments of its exercise' (1977: 170). Anthropologists Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Finn Sivert Nielsen (2001) conceptualise discipline as similar to Bourdieu's habitus as creating and enduring "structure and power that have been impressed on the body forming permanent dispositions" (130). The emphasis on a permanency of the bodily disposition in this reading of Foucault suggests that both the ballet training, but also importantly, the short- term

military training had an enduring effect on the bodies (and potentially on the psyche) of the dancers of in Red Detachment.

Foucault argues that the disciplinary technologies that were enacted on soldiers differ from forms of control that had operated previously. He suggested it is a divergence from slavery because discipline does not 'appropriate' the body, and distinct from service because there is no specific 'master' (1977: 137). However, I would argue that in a modern post 1949 republican Chinese setting, unlike the European histories Foucault was analysing, the 'master' is communist party ideology and the revolutionary cause which had to be adhered to lest one face dire punishments, and ultimately, in later years, the master became Mao himself.

It can also be seen the dancers themselves understood the military training to have had psychological effects in addition to physical ones. Madam Zhao noted, "when we came back to Beijing, everyone had changed a lot" (Zhao, 2016: interview). This reflects the outcome of disciplinary technologies on individuals which Foucault observed. He illustrated how in modern societies disciplinary practices moved from outward mechanisms of 'top down' authoritarian discipline to promote stability and control (for example public brutality such as executions), to more subtle and complex forms of disciplinary techniques which result in self-regulation, observation and self-discipline (although, of course, the terror of the Cultural Revolution brought both). The individuals become the instruments of power, regulating their own behaviour. The dancers who experienced the period in the army training camp felt changed by it. Madam Zhao also noted the influence the training had on the choreography of the ballet once rehearsals resumed in Beijing. "In Red Detachment, everything was a copy of the army moves. We move together. Lots of detail. It was very realistic" (ibid.). The dancers had become both objects and instruments of the power exercised by the CCP, enacted in their performance of Red Detachment.

The ballet is set on a tropical island amongst the Li people at the base of the Five Fingered Mountain (*wuzhi shan*, [五指山]) in 1930s Hainan. It takes place during the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927 – 1937), fought between Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist

Kuomingtang and the Chinese communists. The heroine, Wu Qinghua[20], is a poorly treated servant to powerful local landowner, Nan Batian. Qinghua is viciously beaten by the evil landlord but resolves to escape. She eventually manages to flee her oppressor with the aid of Communist officer, Hong Changqing. Qinghua met Changqing when he visited the house of the evil landlord on a reconnaissance mission and pretended to be a wealthy Chinese merchant. Hong is a communist party representative of the Women's company of the Red Army. Directed by Changqing, Qinghua joins the female soldiers. During an attack on the landlord's home, Qinghua, overtaken by anger and passion, fires without orders, and upsets the carefully made battle plans. Through patient guidance by Changqing, Qinghua becomes a disciplined and skilled fighter, who is able to subordinate her personal grievance against the landlord into the larger class war; she becomes a conscious proletarian soldier. Hong Changqing is captured and killed by the landlord's militia. Qinghua subsequently kills the autocrat, and pledges to continue Changqing's fight. The climactic scene of the ballet is very moving, as Qinghua, dressed in red stands before a rippling, red flag, tears streaming down her face. She presses the flag to her cheek, "red flag, oh red flag, today I've found you". Changqing has given his life, but the joining the army marks a new one for Qinghua. Tempered by class struggle, the peasant women who have been set free by the Red Detachment join the ranks of the company and fight in the revolution.

The Red Detachment premiered in the smaller auditorium of the Great Hall of the People in Beijing as part of the National Day (1st October) celebrations in 1964. The audience was a selection of China's leaders and dignitaries. The cast included Bai Shuxiang as Qinghua, Wu Jingzhu as the Detachment's Commander. The principal male role of Hong Changqing, was danced by Liu Qingtang. Liu had matured considerably from his first naïve attempts in Gustev's *Swan Lake* some six years earlier, forming a strong partnership with Bai. Li Chengriang played the evil landlord Nan Batian with Wan Qiwu as Lao Si, the landlord's lackey. Zhao Ruheng played a supporting principal role as Wu's fellow soldier and friend.

20 The character was named Qionghua in the Hainan opera and 1961 film versions of the work. Qionghua was a common name in the Hainan region—meaning both "verdant jade green flower" and "flower of Hainan" (*Qiong* being the literary appellation for the locale). This was changed to Qinghua meaning "outstanding and beautiful" in the ballet (Harris, 2010; Clarke, 2008).

In keeping with Zhou Enlai's 'three processes of transformation', choreographer Jiang Zhuhui moved away from the Soviet style 'pure' *danse d'école* of the classic ballets which had been performed in China, and built on the experimentation of the earlier Chinese ballets making use of Chinese folk dance, particularly the dances of the Hainan Li people, with elements of Chinese classical dance and Peking opera including the martial arts style *wugong* [武功] movement. This hybridity between Western classical ballet and Chinese dance arts constitute some of the indigenization of the form. These native elements allow the ballet to be better understood and enjoyed by ordinary Chinese and ensure a distinctly Chinese identity.

While no recording of the original performance survives, there are documentary excerpts, photography, written documentation and, of course, later productions on film from which to analyse the indigenization of the form. In the opening of the ballet, the use of stylized gesture alongside classical vocabulary from Peking opera is evident. Wu Qinghua, imprisoned by Nan Batian stands in fifth position *en pointe*, her arms chained above her head. It is clear Wu is enraged. In Peking Opera, these stylized gestures employed to convey emotion are called *shen duan* [身段][21]. Qinghua's eyes dart from left to right in quick repetition. This rapid and deliberate use of the eyes is uncommon in classical ballet (where the phrase 'eyeline' is more often used to denote an imaginary projection of the eyes, head and chest into space, often along the arm line) but a conventional feature of Peking Opera. Wu looks at the landlord. The eye movement suggests her fury is directed at him. A similar convention from Chinese opera is the use of 'frozen poses', (liang xiang [亮相]) for emotional emphasis.

21 In addition to its use as a theatrical term, it is interesting to note that *shen duan* [身段] is also used to refer to a beautiful woman's posture or comportment (Stevenson & Cuncun, 2017). This term, as well as the commonplace evaluation of the (female) form, illustrates the penetration of theatre in everyday life in China, albeit in an expression of patriarchy.

(vii.) An example of a 'frozen pose' in Red Detachment of Women (1970), dir. Pan Wenzhan, Fu Jie.

Later in the first act, Qinghua, is searching for an escape route from the landlord's house. Her solo modifies many of the traditional arm positions of classical ballet; fifth position of the arms become hand crossed overhead with clenched fists, third position of the arms are inverted so the side arm is not in *seconde* position but behind her body making an 'S' curve shape with the rounded arm with clenched fists, reminiscent of the 'figure eight circle' (*ba zi yuan* [八字圆]) in Chinese classical dance. First arabesques uses the arm held up, bent 90 degrees at the elbow, fist clenched in a position indicating readiness to fight. She moves to the upstage left corner. From this stage position, a soloist might typically use the long diagonal to perform a series of travelling *posé pirouettes*. Here instead of classical balletic turns, Qinghua uses the diagonal to perform turns called *chuan fan shen* (串翻身), a traditional step from Chinese Opera. With her body pitched at a slight angle towards the floor and arms open in a seconde position she travels downstage right in a series of rapid, off axis turns, spotting[22] the floor, with the feet and legs in parallel under the body.
In many of the full length classic ballets, the final act is a grand divertissement, often some sort of celebration, after the plot of the ballet has been nicely tied up. Here, there will be character dance; balleticised versions of real or imagined folk dances from around the world. Sometimes they serve to give a quaint or exotic feel of the location of the ballet. The

22 'Spotting' is a commonly employed technique used by dancers executing turns. The goal is to attain a constant orientation of the dancer's head and eyes to promote control of the turn and minimize the dancer feeling disorientated or dizzy.

final act of *The Nutcracker* (1980) contains various dubious 'Spanish', 'Russian', 'Arabian' and 'Chinese' dances. The addition of folk movement in revolutionary Soviet ballets also provided a model, and there were other historical precedent as folk forms were adopted in the ballets produced by the German Democratic Republic in the 40s and 50s.

Red Detachment adopts this tradition and presents a balleticised version of Hainan's Li minority group dance. Dressed in red embroidered and pleated blouses and skirts, with silver jewellery, the female dancers appear exotic to the Han majority audience. They dance mainly on *demi pointe* (as in character dances in classical ballets) with the exception of a soloist who dances *en pointe*. They dance elements of Li folk dance combined with classical ballet technique, following the symmetrical floor patterns often associated with proscenium performance.

In the fourth act, Qinghua joins the women's detachment and is learning to shoot. The *corps de ballet*, typically found in soft, feminine tutus, are dressed in army fatigues with jackets, shorts and knee high socks in addition to their pointe shoes. Qinghua moves around the stage wielding the gun with confidence and ease. She performs an arabesque lifting the gun into the air. She moves forwards, her feet and knees coming together in parallel position with slightly bent knees. She runs upstage in a series of small, quick steps. The upper body is virtually still, as the feet, staying together scuttle along the floor in a movement used very frequently in Chinese opera, *pao yuan chang* [跑圓場]. The movement is reminiscent of the gentle, floating of the *bourrée en couru* where the feet move rapidly together skimming floor. The use of substitute steps with similar dynamic qualities means that the inclusion of movements found in other Chinese genres is not jarring, they are in keeping with the classical style, and these local references make ballet more palatable for a naïve audience.

Similarly, the ballet's composers Wu Zuqiang and Du Mingxin,

> … [D]id not let themselves be restricted by the makeup of the western orchestra but used the percussion and other traditional musical instruments of Peking Opera. The bold combination of the western orchestra's range of sound and volume with lively national color enriches the music's power of expression and gives it a unique style popular with the workers, peasants and soldiers (Anon., 1970: 10)

As the choreographer Jiang Zhuhui later recalled: 'with a foundation in our own culture, assimilating all the best of foreign art, broadly gathering and abundantly concentrating (*guangcai boji*), putting all to our purposes: this was our creative aim' (Jiang Zuhui, 1987: 23 in Clarke, 2008: 161).

The creative group concentrated on three aspects in the creation of the work:

(i) "The creation and use of an exquisite and typical dance to portray the heroic proletarian images in the drama"
(ii) "the music in the ballet must be derived from the revolutionary political content, and must be subordinate to dance, in order to serve the portrayal of the heroic proletarian images"
(iii) "the stage arts in the drama must serve the portrayal of the heroic proletarian images, and the stress must be on 'cleanness'" (*Zhongguo wujutuan*, 1970 in Liu [translated by Mason] 2010: 445)

The ballet's protagonist Qinghua is an excellent example of a 'heroic proletarian image'. She fears neither hardship nor death, and is tenacious in her dedication to the revolution and ending class war. The characteristics of her movement vocabulary were described as "fiery revolt, rough-hewn ardour and revolutionary explosive force" (ibid). The team hoped the ballet would be thought of as "describing, epitomising, intensifying and abstracting the lives of struggle of the workers, peasants and soldiers from a proletarian aesthetic point of view, and displaying the beautiful, spiritual world of the main characters in the new age which takes Mao Zedong Thought as its great banner – the proletariat and the great labouring people" (ibid).

Our protagonist, Wu Qinghua, is a typical example of the beleaguered Chinese worker. Her condition at the beginning of the ballet reflects the shape of the proletariat and the status of the nation; they are both weak and desperate. Dressed in a red tattered, shirt with a mandarin collar, her clothes are frayed and worn; her poverty written on her body. Her specific revolutionary narrative is an allegory for a collective national experience. She is oppressed in a class struggle, educated and trained (freed from her false consciousness), enlightened and eventually emancipated. Changqing, is the brave and paternal face of the state. He makes the ultimate sacrifice for the good of the masses. Qinghua joins the revolution to defeat both her specific enemy, and the enemy of communist ideation. The

individual's fate is inextricably bonded with the fate of the state; a fate which will eventually be successful if the moral and ideological codes are strictly followed. The screenwriter and director of the 1961 film, Liang Xin and Xie Jin, later described this overarching narrative as 'revolutionary romanticism' (in Harris, 2010). However, since Mao had proclaimed the work should reflect the real lives of ordinary people, whilst simultaneously being closer to the ideal than commonplace life, it could be argued that the operas were a combination of 'revolutionary realism' with 'revolutionary romanticism' (Anon, 1966: 11). In practical terms, this meant that the leading heroic characters of the ballet are faultless, fearless and selfless. The enemies, by contrast are entirely and exclusively evil[23].

There was significant praise and attention given to the ballet following its premiere indicating the perceived success of the work, and relief that the project of revolutionizing art has been fruitful. China had produced a substantial, full length work which conformed to the ideological sensibilities of the day. Shan Hua commented in *The People's Daily* newspaper, "a dance formula has been created which has clear characteristics of ballet but is also steeped in the atmosphere of the times and has a unique national style" (Shan, 1970 in Liu 2010: 445). Jiang Qing was subsequently extolled for having "successfully stormed the most stubborn fortress of art till then so tightly controlled by the Western bourgeoisie" (Wu, 1969:5) The ballet was seen as a successful experiment in both the indigenization of a Western form, but also the first steps in revolutionizing all art, even beyond China's borders, using Maoist ideology, "The choice of the ballet as a first target of attack in carrying out the policy of 'making foreign things serve China' is actually a significant beginning in the remoulding of the world's theatrical stage with the thought of Mao Zedong." (ibid). The Red Detachment "has completely swept away the formalist, aestheticist, naturalistic rotten art of the bourgeoisie and opened up a new road for the development of the art of proletarian ballet" (Shan, 1970 in Liu 2010: 445). Ballet was the first Western form to be remodeled, and shortly following, there was a Western symphony. In successfully revolutionizing these genres, with their longstanding bourgeois connection, underpinned by the hegemonic cultural knowledge and values of the ruling class, they stand as symbols of hope that in the

23 While this is not a feature exclusive to Chinese ballet; it could be argued to be true of the lack of dimensionality of villains (Carabosse, Von Rothbart etc.) in Western classical ballets too, it is a marked consequence of the 'three prominences' guideline in creating characters.

real world, as in the model works, the proletariat and revolutionary ideology can overcome class oppression.

Propaganda work such as Red Detachment became the only ballets that were allowed to be performed during the Cultural Revolution, and their initial success in Beijing made possible the popularization of the work that had been insisted upon in Zhou Enlai's 'three processes of transformation'. As such, the ballet was taken to the people and performed in rural villages and in the collective communes. More often than not, the dancers performed on make shift stages, or even on the hard ground, outdoors in all weathers with very limited set and lighting. The dancers, musicians and actors were forced to walk from village to village carrying their costumes, instruments and props on their backs. They had inadequate nutrition and as a result the dancers grew weak. Madam Zhao recalls her experience of walking to the rural villages to perform,

> It was before the Spring Festival[24], in the winter time, we walked county to county for fifty days without stopping. We performed forty-nine performances outside in the winter time. At that time we would wear our ballet shoes performing on the snow covered ground. Today you would never think of doing such a thing, but back then we had no choice – we had to do it. (Zhao, 2016: interview)

Zhao recalls the dancers singing whilst they walked to break the monotony and help maintain their spirits. The long hours walking and dancing on cold, hard, uneven surfaces took its toll on the bodies of the dancers. Enduring these feats of extreme physicality and hardship is reminiscent of the Maoist attitudes to the necessity of some physical suffering to strengthen the character. As explored in chapter two, Mao was committed to his own physical and mental training by exposing himself as a young man to the harsh elements, 'We slept in the open when frost was already falling and even in November swam in the cold rivers. All this went on under the title of 'body training' (Snow, 1937: 172-173 in Uberoi, 1998: 120). Later CCP slogans highlighting the forging and tempering – as with steel – were frequently employed. Historian of modern China, Tina Mai Chen (2003: 365) notes that citizens were encouraged to "build up a good physique to defend the country" (*duanlian*

24 The Spring Festival is an important traditional festival celebrated at the turn of the Chinese lunisolar calendar. The festival lasts for 15 days from Chinese New Year's Eve to the Lantern Festival on the 15th day of the Lunar New Year. The festival typically falls between mid-January and mid-February.

shenti baowei zuguo), “build a good physique for socialism” (*weile shehuizhuyi jiji duanlian shenti*), and “temper oneself through manual labor” (*laodong duanlian*). Chen and others (such as Brownell, 1995) indicate that the verb choice ‘*duanlian’* [锻炼] (to temper or steel), reinforced the desirability of an “iron body.” 1995). The term ‘*duanlian*’ invokes two images which are reflective of the process for the individual body and the body in relation to the state. It makes apparent both the arduous process necessary to forge an iron body in Maoist China and also the strength of China’s new future once this tempering has been completed. This term was additionally used to refer to the process in which intellectuals, urban youth, or those considered removed from ordinary life were sent to factories and the rural countryside to be ‘re-educated’ by works and peasants. This was reform initiative through physical labour[25].

In an interview with Madam Zhao I enquired about the process of walking from village to village to perform the Red Detachment. I asked if she felt as though the ‘tempering’ of the body that occurred through physically walking had also served to temper the dancers’ minds; that enduring physical hardship as the workers and peasants solidified their belief in the good of the revolution. “It is almost like that. Some of the dancers thought that they were special people. But once we walked every day and we saw the ordinary people, we saw their lives and we changed our mind. We were not special people, we were the same, just like them.” (Zhao, 2016: interview). “It was meant to train our minds, make us strong, and give us experienced of the countryside as part of our revolutionary education” (Zhao, 2011 [online]). There was also a pragmatic reason for the arduous walk to perform to the peasants: there was no money for a bus and poor infrastructure in rural areas. This disciplinary technique was accompanied by a forced Maoist education within the ballet

25 The term ‘*Duanlian*’ [锻炼] also has a gendered dimension. Chen (2003) suggests that in written accounts about the socialist female model workers or the iron girls of the Mao era, women had to ‘*duanlian*’ or reform their physical bodies as well as redefine femininity when they moved into traditionally male areas of work. Therefore the claims of greater equality achieved in the Maoist era were perhaps less enduring. Moreover, the idea that women had to minimize traditionally female characteristics devalues femininity and privileges traditional concepts of masculinity.

As such, *duanlian*’ does not only mean "to work out" in the Western sense, but evokes other historically and politically charged conceptions of the physical body which link exercise to the cultivation of the proletarian workers' body and the building of the Chinese socialist state.

company. The dancers were also forced to read Mao's works before rehearsal and sing songs praising Mao afterwards. There were many casualties in the ballet company. One lunchtime, following a struggle meeting, the ballet's conductor hanged himself (Zhao, 2016: interview).

The solidarity between the dancers and the peasants was conferred not only through the physical hardship endured through long walks, but also symbolically through the costuming of the dancers' bodies during the performance. The dancers were not permitted to wear their normal costumes, instead they wore simple, loose peasant clothing with their ballet shoes. The previous chapter noted that the short, form fitting costumes and to some extent unclothed dancers, had been scandalous to members of the CCP when they have been taken to the Soviet Union to watch a performance of *Swan Lake* in the late 50s. For most Chinese, even for the educated politicians, such little clothing was considered indecent. Despite changing attitudes, this association between the display of the physical form and immorality would likely have endured into the 60s, especially in rural areas amongst less educated Chinese where the dancers were performing Red Detachment. Wearing the everyday clothing of the peasants during performance could be argued to serve two functions. Firstly, everyday attire made the ballet more acceptable to the audiences, avoiding disrupting the sensibilities of the peasant worker. Secondly, dressed in everyday clothing, the dancers created images which the ordinary person could identifying with, imagining him or herself making a similarly valiant contribution to the revolutionary effort. Perhaps even more so than when the dancers performed in costumes, the Red Detachment uncostumed fulfilled Jiang Qing's aim to generate art which created and promoted proletariat heroes.

(viii.) Dancers performing outside in the countryside, 1968 (National Ballet of China Archives, © National Ballet of China).

For most of the villagers, this was their first encounter with classical ballet. The revolutionizing of the form following the 'three processes of transformation' and the 'three prominences' made the ballet accessible to naïve audiences, and was very successful. "In every town 20,000 to 30,000 people sat below the stage and watched us perform in the freezing cold weather . . . It was all outdoors in the light of day." (Zhao in Young 2011: CBS News)

The dangerous performance spaces and long, arduous walks in poor weather eventually led to the demise of Madam Zhao's career. By 1971, she had suffered a severe and permanent injury to her right foot. Weak and tired, Zhao broke a bone in her foot whilst performing. There were no x-rays taken to diagnose the problem, and no specialists with whom to consult. Eventually Zhao underwent two operations to treat the injured foot, but they were unsuccessful and she was forced to retire from performing. "My injury ultimately was the embodiment of that time. I had become a sacrifice of the Cultural Revolution," (ibid.)

This chapter illuminated the conscious manipulation of classical ballet during the revolutionary period. Demonstrating how the CCP imposed guidelines for the creation of art

for the nation, we are able to explore the reinvention of ballet, and how Chinese ballets came to occupy a unique position; as almost a discreet genre of classical ballet. Using the Red Detachment as a case study, the chapter analysed the ways in which the form was revolutionized as the same time as made accessible to the masses. It also illustrated how the physical bodies of the dancers are co-opted in service of politics and the state. The next chapter will build on this discussion to explore the ballets created during the later years of Revolutionary period and describe how the chaos of the Cultural Revolution finally came to an end.

CHAPTER FIVE: 5.1 Evolution of Ballet PART THREE– Revolutionary Period to Reform and Open Era
The White Haired Girl

This chapter builds on the discussion in the previous chapter and continues to document the evolution of ballet in China. It analyses another of the model works, *The White Haired Girl*. It also describes the ballets created during the later years of Revolutionary period, and established how these new works were created following the models generating during the era. It also notes how the chaos of the Cultural Revolution finally came to an end.

The Red Detachment came out of the ballet company in Beijing, but the second revolutionary ballet, *The White Haired Girl*, was the product of Shanghai Ballet. Referred to affectionately by those interviewed who had performed the ballets during the Cultural Revolution as 'Red' and 'White', *The White Haired Girl* had a longer artistic pedigree than its sister work. As with Red Detachment, the title and storyline were somewhat familiar to audiences. During the Yan'an period (the wartime communist headquarters in northern China between 1936 – 47) rural art forms such as storytelling and northern China's *yangge* ([秧歌] 'rice sprouting song') music and dance were used to conduct a successful propaganda campaign amongst the largely illiterate rural peasant population (Hung, 2005). *Yangge* was commonly practiced in Shaanxi, Shandong and Liaoning provinces in rituals and celebrations, typically around the New Year and Spring Festival. Following Mao's 1942 talk on the revolutionising of art and literature, socialist elements permeated *yangge*, and a new form, known as 'struggle yangge' (douzheng yangge [斗爭秧歌]) emerged. In 1938, the CCP established the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Art in Yan'an in which to train men and women in literature, music, fine arts, and drama. It was here that the dance was reformed using communist semiology; floor patters embodying a five pointed star, and props including a worker's sickle were introduced. The students of the college began to write simple scripts for dance dramas using the new 'struggle yangge' style to bring alive specific local problems, or myths. *The White Haired Girl* followed this mould and told the local tale of a 'white haired goddess' who was said to be living in a concealed cave after fleeing Japanese aggression in the Shansi – Chahar- Hopei border region (an area in the northwest recovered from the Japanese). The musical dance drama was a collaboration between many at the Lu Xun Academy. The libretto was written by He Jingzhi [賀敬之]and Ding Yi [丁毅] and the

composer was Ma Ke [馬可]. In 1950 one of the first new works from the nationalized studios was a film version of the musical. The crew included Japanese technicians that were still residing in China following the end of the second Sino- Japanese was in 1945. Adapted from the folktale and following the ideology of the period, the film told the story of a young peasant woman, Xi'er fleeing the village home she shares with her farther because of unwanted advances from her landlord. She escapes to the mountains, undergoes much suffering to survive and her hair turns white. Her fiancée Wang Dachun eventually finds her and brings Xi'er back to her home where the village is celebrating being liberated by the Communist army. The film, directed by Shui Hua and Wang Bin, and starring a relatively unknown actor, Tian Hua as Xi'er, was a huge success attracting audiences of eighty million viewers. The film's theme song, 'The Blowing North Wind' was more popular still and would have been familiar to most ordinary Chinese.

It was the 1950 film that left leaning artists and friends of China, ballerina Mikiko Matsuyama and her husband, Masao Shimizu, founder and director of the Matsuyama Ballet Company based in Tokyo, Japan, saw and adapted into a short ballet. Shimizu saw the film in his home country in 1952. It was being shown by the Chinese Japanese Friendship Association in a small assembly room in a shopping district in Tokyo. Shimizu was inspired by the film's portrayal of the bravery and tenacity of peasant's revolt against the oppressive landowning class. The full ballet choreographed by the couple, was expanded from a solo they initially created, based on Xi'er, the story's heroine. It premiered in Tokyo in 1955 with Mikiko Matsuyama dancing the eponymous role. Three years later, despite the diplomatic tensions between China and Japan, the Matsuyama company performed the ballet *The White Haired Girl* in Beijing's Tianqiao Theatre. The Matsuyama company had received an invitation to perform in China during a visit arranged by Premier Zhou Enlai, who sent Sun Pinghua, Deputy Head of the Peking Opera with Peking Opera master Mei Lanfang to Japan in 1957. In 1958 the company had twelve performances in Beijing, before embarking on a six-week tour of Chongqing, Wuhan and Shanghai. In Shanghai the company performed to an audience including dancers from the Shanghai Dance School and Shanghai Ballet Company. The company returned to China in 1964. Company director Masao Shimizu was invited to the gate of Tiananmen Square during the 1st October National Day parade where he first met Mao Zedong. One month later, the company mounted a production of *The*

White Haired Girl in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Leaders such as Mao, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi and Zhu De were in the audience and met with the dancers following the performance. Shimizu recalls that Mao commented that China and Japan were similar in the countries' respect for tradition, noting that ballet as a genre is old, but nevertheless the Matsuyama's production was innovative. The left leaning, overtly political narrative of the ballet was novel. Shimizu was also innovative in applying the Maoist methods of reinvention to a well-known folk tale nearly ten years before the Red Detachment working group began their creation. Shimizu was innovative in including elements of Yangge folk dance to liven and localize the ballet. In Shimizu's conversation with Mao he noted the application of the Moaist guides on reinvention of classic works "We often learn from the speech at the 'Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art', and used it to guide our art" (Shimizu in Anon, 1970a). Shimizu also noted that 'in his *Talks*, [Mao raises] the question of whom literature and art should serve. This enables us to grasp how we should make use of the artistic form of ballet in the service of the Japanese people's revolutionary struggle.' (Anon, 1970a: 112). Shimizu notes his desire for Japan to learn from Maoist China in order to fight a Japanese revolution, and highlights that ballet might make a significant contribution.

The Matsuyama Ballet Company was the only Japanese ensemble granted permission to stage performances in China during the Cultural Revolution, returning to perform in China eight times in the twenty years between 1958 and 1978 (Shimizu, 1983 in Huang 2017 *Global Times* [online]). In 1971 the troupe embarked on their fourth visit to China, this time performing further afield, in cities including Xi'an in Shaanxi province and Changsha in Hunan province. They made a significant contribution to Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations (Itoh, 2012).

As was done in the making of the Red Detachment, the Chinese ballet adaptation of *The White Haired Girl* was taken on by a working group from the Shanghai Dance School and the affiliated Shanghai Ballet Company. They had been encouraged in 1963 by the municipal government and cultural bureau to create new works including the new-style Peking operas, which reflected contemporary local life and modern themes. The Shanghai Dance School White Haired Girl creative group was led by choreographer Hu Rong Rong [胡蓉蓉]. Hu was a child star in China. As a result of popularity of the American child star Shirley Temple in

China in the 1930s, Hu was chosen for stardom by a Chinese film studio as a domestic counterpart. She was a very pretty girl, who had begun ballet training aged five. An accomplished singer and dancer, she performed in many films, eventually becoming known as 'China's Shirley Temple', before she turned to choreography in her later years. Hu led the choreographic team of *The White Haired Girl* which included Fu Aidi, Cheng Daihui and Lin YangYang. The score was composed by Yan Jinxuan, Chen Benhong, and Zhang Hongxiang. The creative group lived in a suburb of Shanghai in the compound of the Shanghai Dance School which was home to 130 dancers and teachers, an orchestra of 56 and 45 members of the PLA (Snow, 1973: 202).

The ballet takes place in the border territory in Northern China. On the eve of Chinese New Year, our heroine Xi'er, a young peasant girl and her poor and slightly muddled father, Yang Bailao, are making preparations for the upcoming festival. Her father presents Xi'er with the gift of a red hair ribbon. She is brought flour by her betrothed Wang Dachun and proceeds to make *jiaozi* dumplings for the festivities. That evening, their landlord, a Japanese traitor called Huang Shiren, comes to their home and demands payment for a debt he claims is owed. Yang Bailao has nothing to give him. Confused and bewildered, Yang Bailao is forced to sign a contact, giving his daughter Xi'er to the Huang family as payment. Xi'er is taken away by the evil landlord's lackeys, and a fight between Yang Bailao and Huang Shiren breaks out. Old Yang struggles but is eventually beaten to death by Huang. Wang Dachun runs away to join the Eighth Route Army led by the CCP. Xi'er is treated poorly by the Huang family, and with her last will, escapes and flees to the wild mountains. Xi'er overcomes many struggles to find safe cave in which to hide. She lives like a wild animal, without any human contact, foraging for food to enable her survival. Her hardships, and lack of appropriate diet mean that her hair turns pure white. Local villagers who cross her path consider the White Haired Girl to be a ghost, and no one comes to her aid. The detachment of the Eighth Route Army led by Wang Dachun finally rescue her. They return to home village and are able to liberate it from the Japanese. The landlord is executed. Xi'er and Wang Dachun celebrate with the local villagers under a socialist realist sunset.

The White Haired Girl as with Red Detachment, drew upon both Western and Chinese traditions including, classical ballet, traditional Chinese dance, Chinese folk dance, martial

arts, and movement from Chinese dance dramas. The creative team followed a directive given by Ke Chingshi, First Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, to incorporate Chinese style folk-songs, both solos and chorus into the ballet. Musically the ballet fuses a combination of chorus and arias as in Western opera, with a singing style based upon the folk songs of northern Shaanxi peasants. This was to ensure legibility and familiarity for common people, who were generally unacquainted with classical ballet, guaranteeing they understood the narrative and enjoyed what they saw. The story was historically contextualised with music from the Sino-Japanese War including a song from the PLA, "The three main rules of discipline and the eight points for attention". The orchestra differs from most of the revolutionary modern operas which use largely Western instrumentation, in that the score for *The White Haired Girl* used Western and Chinese instruments in its orchestration, such as the three-stringed lute (*sanxian* [三弦]), the bamboo transverse flute (*dizi* [笛子}), the northern Chinese soundboard violin (*banhu* [板胡]) and the two stringed violin/southern fiddle (*erhu* [二胡]) (Melvin and Cai, 2004). Derk Bodde, an American Sinologist and historian of China noted the success of this musical fusion following a performance of *The White Haired Girl* in Beijing in 1949,

> The music, which is charming and often poignant, is neither Western nor does it include any of the falsetto singing of the traditional Chinese opera. Much of it is based on Chinese folk music … The orchestra is a combination of Western string instrument (violin, cello contrabass) with the native erhu, flute, drum, gong and wooden clapper. In some themes the Western instruments predominate; in others, the Chinese. The result is remarkably successful and constitutes a new musical genre (Bodde, 1950: 166-67).

The composers used a strategy commonly employed in classical ballet. Each character is differentiated musically by separate instruments with a unique musical theme. There is a legacy of this treatment of scores for ballets in the West. For example, in *Swan Lake*, the leitmotif, a plaintive solo on oboe, is associated with the ballet's heroine, Odette. The theme is first teasingly introduced in the overture, and heard in full for the first time at the end of act I, with the appearance of the swans at night while Siegfried is hunting. The theme recurs at the beginning of the second act and again in act III. It is here where Tchaikovsky renders Odile's deception through the use of instrumentation. Odile has a solo to an oboe solo accompanied by harp. This variation on a motif and instrument normally associated with

Odette indicates that something is not as it seems (Frey, 2015). This musical strategy is mirrored in the composition of *The White Haired Girl*, where different instruments and themes demarcate the main characters. A trumpet solo plays Yang Bailao's theme melody and Xi'er theme 'The North Wind Blows' can be found throughout the entire ballet. The theme is well known, and reappears with differences in tone, register, colour, volume and instrumentation which creates an entire musical image for our heroine. The theme is played on both Western and Chinese instruments such as the flute, clarinet, oboe, *dizi* and *banhu*.

The movement of the ballet too, mirrors the fusion of Western forms with native genres. In the opening scene of the ballet Xi'er is decorating her humble home with Chinese papercutting for the upcoming Spring Festival. Although dressed in red Chinese pyjamas, her light, delicate solo constituting low *posé passé* into small *développé devant* is reminiscent of Giselle's carefree entrance in the eponymous ballet. Both simple peasant girls, Giselle and Xi'er dance with youthful abandon in front of their homes in the comfort of their native village setting. However, in *The White Haired Girl* some the classical lines are somewhat modified. Classical, externally rotated arm position are swapped for the inwardly rotated forearms with outward facing palms known as *shan bang* [山膀]commonly seen in Chinese dance.

(ix.) An example of a *shan bang* [山膀]arm position in *The White Haired Girl* (1972, dir. Sang Hu)

The choreographers and the dancers themselves also understood the importance of their work for the state, and that key to the success of their work was the reinvention of ballet technique. Choreographer Lin YangYang told Lois Wheeler Snow on her 1970 visit to the Shanghai Dance School,

> in order to depicts heroic images of workers, peasants and soldiers, we have cast away unnatural, artificial dances. We use formal ballet conventions but have given them revolutionary content. For example, typical in ballet: ying feng chan chih – to spread one's wings in the welcoming breeze[26] [here Lin demonstrated with knowing eloquence an arabesque in a languid and lyrical movement] when instilled with revolutionary content changes from litheness to fervour [his body became firm and charged with force and *Swan Lake*'s decedent prince became a revolutionary (*note in original)*] . . . it shows heroic revolutionary defiance . . .
> Our ballet calls for a whole new set of dance language. When Hsi-erh [Xi'er] is taken by the landlord, her boyfriend picks up an axe and dances solo, but this is very different from the bourgeois male solo which is an egotistical display for applause. A pas-de-deux is used when Hsi-erh fights off the landlord; when turns are used, it is in a different nature and context for the old ballet. (in Snow, 1973:208).

Lin is acknowledging that the context of the work affects how ballet technique imparts meaning understanding that steps that may look similar can be read very differently given their context.

Shortly following Xi'er's solo in the first act, her betrothed Wang Dachun comes to join in the festival preparations. He dances a short solo before the couple dance a pas de deux. This follows the structural convention in Western classical ballet of presenting a group dance, a female solo, a male solo followed by a pas de deux. Wang Dachun completes his solo with a striking frozen pose (as in Red Detachment), the *xiao she yan* [小射燕]. Rather than using the typical arm position for this movement, *shun feng qi* [顺风旗] (see in the figure below), the arms have been made stronger, using a signature of the revolutionary ballets, the clenched fist, used to indicate a strength, willing and readiness to fight for the revolutionary cause. The modification of this step, a fundamental pose of Chinese classical dance,

26 Here Lin is using the Chinese terminology adopted during the Cultural Revolution to avoid using the more typical French terminology used in the rest of the world. The step he describes is an arabesque line with arms in an open fifth position, sternum and eye-line raised along the line of the hands.

highlights that the model works did not only modify the steps of Western classical ballet to revolutionise the genre, they did the same to Chinese dance forms. Therefore model works were not simply a fusion of Western and Chinese dances, they in fact adapted all movement, ensuring it served to promote the ideological narrative. Both classical forms, the Chinese *gudian wu* and ballet's *danse d'école*, are altered and disrupted to promote ideology, as in the images below, for example, to highlight particularly heroic character traits (following Madame Mao's 'three prominences' guidelines). Thus the dance forms themselves, and the purity of the aesthetics of the specific works of art, are subservient to politics.

(x.)Xiao she yan performed with technical precision by a student at the Beijing Dance Academy and (xi.) in a modified form by Wang Dachun in The White Haired Girl *(1972,* dir. Sang Hu)

Act IV makes use of regional festivities to localise the ballet and make it familiar to the naïve audience. The act centres around the northern Shanxi province's *shehuo* [社火] bonfire festival which was used to send off the Spring Festival on the fifteenth day of the first month of the Chinese lunar calendar. '*She*' refers to the God of land and '*huo*' to the God of fire. The festival reaching its peak during the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1912) dynasties was originally held to worship the two Gods, and was an occasion to showcase the folk culture of the region including *yangge*. Much as in Red Detachment, the folk dance is balleticised, as the dancers form a circle around the unlit bonfire, to perform a version of the 'peddle boat dance', *paohanchuan* [跑旱船]. They dance to a Chinese percussion

ensemble, *luogu* [锣鼓], including many different types of drum, several types of metal idiophone such as gongs and cymbals and wooden idiophone including temple locks and Chinese claves. As the ensemble reaches a crescendo, the dancers light the bonfire, and individual torches from it. Xi'er approaches the fire with a note which reads, 'share out land' and offers it up to the God by throwing it in the fire. She moves centre downstage and turns the ritual circle dance into a march, arms swinging side to side, fist clenched performed by the whole cast who break out of the circle and form uniform lines. Xi'er unites the villagers, as in an army, through shared movement and rhythm. They march together in support of the revolution, mobilising and unifying even the minority ethnicities who all dance together as the act draws to a close. This last strategy of unifying the minority and majority groups was key to the strategy to 'nationalise' the model works; promoting an image of all of China's people united in their revolutionary aims.

This unity was emphasised in the epilogue created for the ballet, which had not been part of previous versions of the work, in which Xi'er and the villagers join the revolutionary army. They demonstrate their dedication and infinite gratitude for the party and their love of their saviour, Mao himself. This is shown in the theme of the epilogue where the lyrics state: "Mao Zedong is the [S]un, The [S]un is the Communist Party" (Yu, 1978: 121-122 in Chen, 2002: 80).

Much like Qinghua in Red Detachment, Xi'er reflects the experience of the nation. The ballet portrays the literal life-and-death struggle between the bourgeoisie and proletariat, and serves to raise the peasants' class consciousness, turn them against class enemies such as landlord Huang Shiren, and warn against the evils of private land ownership. The corps de ballet of villagers and peasants transition seamlessly into an army corps demonstrating the essential contribution of all workers if the revolution was to be won. The imagery of Xi'er, reminiscent of a spirit, with striking hair turned pure white, reinforced the CCP's didactic message: "The old society forced human beings to turn into ghosts; the new society changes ghosts back into human beings" (Bai (2010) in King et al, 2010: 193).

On 23rd May 1965, the 22nd anniversary of the Yan'an Forum, the new full length Chinese *The White Haired Girl* was performed as part of the 'Shanghai Springs' Festival of new work. Between this premiere and November 1965, the ballet played in major theatres in the city. The ballet transferred to Beijing in April 1966 and was performed in theatres in the nation's capital until June. As a result of its familiarity as a film, as well as the success of the score, *The White Haired Girl* was well received. The ballet's political association with the Yan'an talks, as well as its strict adherence to the 'three processes of transformation' and 'three prominences' meant that the masses could understand and enjoy the work despite ballet's Western and bourgeois foundations and their unfamiliarity with the genre. Lin Bei Xin, a soloist with the Shanghai Ballet company recounted his experiences performing *The White Haired Girl* in the countryside.

> We were thirteen or fourteen when we first came here in 1960; we didn't know much about 'the struggle between the two lines'. Before the Cultural Revolution we only paid attention to vocational studies and not to politics at all. Technique was uppermost. Once we went to the countryside and put on *Swan Lake*, expecting some praise from the peasants. Some people left; some fell asleep; and some, said 'it's ugly'. We thought it was because they knew nothing about art. Later on, we realized it was just the opposite – we didn't know the art of the workers, peasants and soldiers. They want art forms that unite them with the socialist revolution. There was a great ideological difference between us and them. So we began to rehearse *The White Haired Girl.* When we went back to the countryside the situation was completely different. Twenty thousand people came to see us perform on the threshing ground. Some stood on the back of the stage and said they were happy if they could only see the backs of the dancers. They stood on roofs, in trees, all over. They brought friends and families. We express their love and hatred; we speak for them. Some cry. We feel very excited because they support us so thoroughly (in Snow, 1973: 203-204).

Lin highlights several important realities for ballet during the Cultural Revolution. Firstly, he suggests that the village peasants 'want art forms that unite'. In this way he is suggesting ballet does not feel irrelevant or extravagant during this period of crisis and hardship (as it had in Russia during the revolution or in Britain during World War II). Their art is something that is gratefully received. Moreover, the revolutionary ballets bridge what Lin considered an 'ideological difference' between the peasants and the dancers. The works themselves reflect the experiences of the peasants, and project a hopeful future whilst simultaneously allowing the dancers to somewhat understand the everyday lives of the proletariat and

appreciate their struggles. The ballets also served to encourage revolutionary fervour and ensured that the dancers themselves consider their craft as important war work. Dancers became the soldiers of the CCP mobilising the masses for the advancement of socialism just as Mao had proposed in the Yan'an forum more than twenty years earlier.

A ballerina playing the role of Xi'er, Cai Guo Ming highlighted her own experience of living, working and performing for the peasants.

> To work with the peasants does away with the delicateness and fragility of the dancers. We used to need naps and were afraid to work because it might hurt us. We thought we were special people. We *can't* do the same work as the peasants; we do the work of the aged and the children. After two hours of cotton picking we have to kneel down. They work for eight hours. We are not as good as them in many respects. In capitalist society the artists feel a head taller than others, but we feel ordinary now when we work with peasants and workers (in Snow, 1973: 205).

The comradery with the workers as well as sense that the dancers were engaged in important ideological, revolutionary work was demonstrated by Lin when he commented: 'Last November it was cold, but we felt warm in our hearts when we performed for the peasants. We get clay on our ballet shoes – this shows we are serving our socialist society, that our stand is correct' (in Snow, 1973: 204).

The experiences of these dancers also illustrate the success of CCP in identifying where traditional and classical art forms had been alienating and constructing the processes through which art was to be transformed (nationalized, popularized and revolutionized) in order to best serve their political goals. The ballets themselves became relevant and significant to the masses, who flocked to see the performances. Because ballet had been seen to be so thoroughly bourgeois thought to 'best express despair sorrow, debauchery and madness, the neurotic psychology of the dying exploiter classes' (Anon., 1970: 10) it was wildly celebrated following the revolution of the form, as being able to 'express the soaring, confident and militant spirit of the proletariat' (ibid). This success was the result of the hard work of the choreographers, teachers, dancers and other experts part of the 'creative teams' but may have been amplified as a result of the personal interest important political figures such as Zhou Enlai took in the new ballet (Clark, 2008).

Although Jiang Qing herself is the person most associated with the public discourse around the model works, there is debate amongst scholars about the degree of input she had on the creation of these ballets. Much of the press at the time of the first performances of these work celebrate Jiang Qing's contributions, however, post-Cultural Revolution accounts tend not to emphasise this. In his excellent chapter on dance during the Cultural Revolution, Australian Sinologist Paul Clarke (2008) claims that Jiang Qing did not even watch *The White Haired Girl* until 1967, two years after the work's premiere. Director of the Chinese and Asian studies at Drew University, Di Bai, however uses sources written during the Cultural Revolution to conclude that *The White Haired Girl* was created under the 'direct guidance' of Jiang Qing (Bai (2010) in King et al, 2010: 194). There is consensus however, that Jiang Qing was responsible for several changes in narrative of the ballet from the 1950 film version. In the 1950 film Xi'er's father Yang Bailao kills himself following his altercation with Huang Shiren where he signs his daughter over to the landlord. This was deemed weak by Jiang Qing, therefore in the ballet, he adopts the fighting spirit of the revolution, Yang attempts to protect himself in the face of the aggression of his oppressors, but is eventually beaten to death. The ballet also removes a scene where Xi'er is raped by Huang Shiren and becomes pregnant. When Xi'er runs away to the mountains and gives birth to still-born baby. Wang Dachun's role in the ballet is also reduced. He is no longer Xi'er's love interest. It was thought that an expression of love or even a marriage in the final scene was too structurally similar to the finales of many bourgeois Western ballets. Instead the two are reunited as comrades and celebrate below a red sun, used to represent Mao. Furthermore, in removing any hint of sexuality from Xi'er, the ballet reminds us that her primary concern is her class consciousness, and her brothers and sisters in the revolution.

In *The Red Detachment of Women*, there were also other significant changes in the narrative in the ballet from the film. In the film, there is a secondary plot line which is omitted from the ballet. Hong Lian is a woman disguised as a man in male clothing that Wu Qinghua encounters on her travels to the red base area. Hong Lian lives alone after being forced to endure a ten year old arranged marriage to a wooden doll symbolising the dead boy to whom she was betrothed to as a young girl. She is a frightened of sexual assault and so lives as a man. Hong Lian joins Wu Qinghua and they make it to the army base. Here Hong Lian is

free to live as a women without fear. Bai Di (2010), notes that now she feels safe, Hong Lian marries her secret lover, and gives birth to a baby girl suggesting that a motivation which drives women to join the revolution might be a happy marriage. In so doing Hong Lian represents the ideal CCP woman; she is revolutionary and feminine, a loyal comrade, wife and mother. The CCP have saved her from the indignity and humiliation of her arranged marriage, and freed her of the fear of sexual assault.

There are also reports of more trivial ways that Jiang Qing was influential in the development of the model operas. Li Delun ([李德伦]1917 – 2001) was a conductor and composer, one of the most prominent Western-style musicians of the Cultural Revolution. Li was rather scathing of Jiang Qing's artistic pedigree, suggesting her knowledge of Western music was at the very best, poor. "She couldn't understand anything … she couldn't understand a fart! All she could do is pick the colours of the costumes: "that green isn't right"" (Li in Melvin & Cai, 2004: 254). Despite this, Jiang Qing had strong opinions that had to be implemented. One infamous example is the case of the trombones in the Western symphony orchestra. Jiang Qing is reported to have told Li Delun that she did not care for the trombones in the orchestra. To her, they sounded, 'counter revolutionary'. Li, unable to envisage his orchestra without trombones, quickly responded that the sound that she so disliked actually came from the tuba. Thus, the tuba was removed from the orchestra for the remainder of the Cultural Revolution in order to the save the trombone (Melvin & Cai, 2004).

Similarly bizarre orders were issued to the Central Ballet Company with the banning of two traditional steps of the ballet vocabulary. The *pas de basque* and the *entrechat* were banned after Jiang Qing labelled them 'counter revolutionary' (Glasstone, 2007). Jiang Qing also policed the French terminology of classical ballet, insisting that steps be called by new, Chinese names. These names were more poetic than the French descriptions and many had proletarian or revolutionary connotations; *arabesques* became known as 'spreading your wing in the welcome breeze', *pas de bourée piqué* as 'sewing the seeds' and large split leaps, *grand écart en l'air*, 'sharp leaps to frighten the enemy' (Glasstone, 2007; Zhao, 2016: interview).

Moreover it is perhaps Jiang Qing who is responsible for one of the most iconic pieces of propaganda created during the Cultural Revolution. In an interview with Zhao Ruheng, she recalled an instance where Madame Mao was watching a rehearsal of Red Detachment before the premiere. Bringing the rehearsal to a holt, she made a suggestion to the choreographers (a suggestion that could not be dismissed without penalty) that Wu Qinghua should perform a specific allegro step that she had previously seen in Western ballet and she thought particularly suitable for this work. Lacking the language to describe the step or the ability to dance it, the choreographers proposed a variety of allegro steps to Madame Mao asking the principal dancers demonstrate each in turn. Madame Mao was getting frustrated, until eventually she remembered the ballet in which the step occurred. She was recalling a Soviet production of *Don Quixote* the fiery, Spanish maiden appears to hover in the air with her castanets, head thrown back in wild abandon. The jump performed, a *sissonne fermé en attitude* with slight back bend is technically very challenging and demonstrates a ballerina's strength and power. At the request of Madame Mao, this jump was added inverting the classical arms in fifth position for inwardly rotated arms with fists. Later when it appears in the final act, Wu Qinghua jumps with two hands over head each holding a grenade, in the place of Kitri's castanets. The jump became a signature motif of Wu Qinghua and an iconic piece of imagery, decorating many walls during the Cultural Revolution. The chorus of female soldiers kneel, heads raised, to watch in awe as Wu Qinghua sores through the air above them, utilising the physically elevated space to mark her strength, bravery and exalted status. This tidy example illustrates the modification of the form to both revolutionize ballet in China and make a clear distinction between Chinese ballet and the genre's Western counterpart.

(xii.)*Sissone fermé en attitude* performed by Svetlana Zakharova (Bolshoi Ballet) as Kitiri in *Don Quixote* and (xiii.) in modified form by Zhu Yan (National Ballet of China*)* in *The Red Detachment of Women*

To return to the analysis introduced in chapter two, it is clear this iconography of the Cultural Revolution exploits the dancer's body as a form of Alter's 'somatic nationalism'. The image of strong and brave Wu Qinghua, flying through the air dressed in army fatigues, grenades in hand, to a backdrop of a loyal comrades with the blood red flag of the CCP became a powerful symbol of the revolution familiar to millions of ordinary Chinese workers. Alter noted how the bodily virtuosity of the individual is made into a symbol that represents their nation. Therefore, rather than reading the image as a Western, inconsequential, bourgeois art with little relevance to the everyday worker; Wu Qinghua's strength, energy, self-discipline, vitality and other virtuous qualities become political metaphors for the state. The success of this image, reflects the success of the disciplining of society through the development of the new physical culture Mao outlined in his 1917 article.

In Mao's 1917 article he makes explicit that both virtue and knowledge reside in the body. In Mao's preposition for China, physical cultivation and virtuosic skill are integral to the cultivation of morality. Dancers were Model Citizens because they embodied the positive qualities of the nation; inspiring others to strive for physical, and by extension, moral and revolutionary cultivation. They are embodiments of somatic nationalism.

In order to extend the reach of these model works, they were reworked into films of the ballets. The films aided in establishing a standardized, 'definitive' version of the ballets, to serve as reference materials for present and future generations of dancers. They were some of the first efforts in mass culture during the Cultural Revolution, as film had not been popular before 1965, and very few people owned a television. They would enable these works to be seen in the furthest reaches of the nation. In May 1969 the Beijing Film Studio started working on a film of the *Red Detachment of Women* which was released in 1970. Meanwhile, a black and white version of *The White Haired Girl* was filmed in 1970 by a unit created from workers from the Shanghai City Film Production Unit and the Shanghai Film Studio, which was later used as a the template (with the same cast and crew) for a colour version of the film which was released in 1972 by the Shanghai Film Studios. The works were also 'fixed' in print in the form of detailed scripts which would ensure that future professional and amateur productions in rural locales would be as faithful as possible to the original ballet.

5.2 Later Model Works

Following the success of the eight first model works, further creation and revision began. Beginning in 1970, these works were the second group of model theatrical pieces. These included six operas: *Songs of the Dragon River* (1972, *Longjiang song*[龙江颂]), *Azalea Mountain* (1973, *Dujuan shan* [杜鹃山*]*), *Fighting on the Plain* (1974, *Pingyuan zuozhan* [平原作战]), *Guerrillas on the Plain* (1974, *Pingyuan youjidui* [[平原游击队]), *Boulder Bay* (1975, *Panshiwan* [磐石湾]), and an opera of the highly successful ballet (rather than the now banned film) *The Red Detachment of Women* (1972, *Hongse niang zijun* [红色娘子军]).

While there were many other ballets created in addition to dance dramas and operas made during this period, only a further two rose to prominence. By 1974 two other ballets, *The Sons and Daughters of the Grasslands* (*caoyuanernv* [草原儿女]) and *Ode to the Yimeng Mountain*, (*Yimeng shan xiaodiao* [沂蒙山小调]) were officially bestowed model work status. Much like Red Detachment and *The White Haired Girl*, the ballets had elements of minority folk song and dance.

Set on the plains of Inner Mongolia on China's northern frontier, *The Sons and Daughters of the Grasslands* told the story of a Mongolian boy and girl fighting the fierce elements to defend their collective's herd of sheep during a blizzard. The ballet was created from an animated cartoon shown ten years earlier by the China Dance-Drama Company which had been established in 1972 and included many members of the Red Detachment creative group. Like Red Detachment and White Haired Girl, the ballet incorporated balleticised versions of Mongolian folk dance and symphonic versions of folk music. The narrative is said to have some foundations in the real life story of two children in Inner Mongolia in 1964. The two children, Temur and his sister Schin are attempting to save their flock from the wind and snow on the pasturelands. Their efforts are sabotaged however, by a counter-revolutionary herd owner, Bayan. Disregarding their own safety the children protect the commune's flock with tenacity, enduring severe cold, hunger and fatigue. They fight Bayan with their bare hands, following his return to the flock where he is trying to destroy the evidence of his sabotage. The children are eventually found by huntsmen and members of the PLA, and Bayan is punished. Unlike Red Detachment and White Haired Girl, which featured an armed struggle [武装斗争], *Sons and Daughters of the Grasslands* demonstrated the class struggle of everyday life endured by ordinary people during peacetime. The Mongolian setting was exotic and colourful to the masses, the everyday story of ordinary people and life accessible, and the context suitably revolutionary. As a result, the ballet was well received.

> The dance-drama *Sons and Daughters of the Grassland* has been a big hit . . . because of its revolutionary political content and rich dance idioms, its vividly expressive and graceful movements . . .

> [It] embodies the salient features of our age and the characteristics of the Mongolian nationality and the younger generation.
>
> The spirit of our time as shown in socialist literature and art finds concentrated expression in the proletarian heroes in literary and art works who are a new generation of people determined to make a clean break with the concept of private ownership. Temur and Schin are typical examples. In China today, the younger generation is nurtured by Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought since childhood and therefore is capable of waging struggles selflessly and dauntlessly against class enemies and against any kind of difficulty (Anon, 1976, *Beijing Review* [online]).

Ode to the Yimeng Mountain was also created by the Central Dance -Drama Company based on a novel entitled *Red Sisters-in-Law*. The ballet is set in the north Chinese heartland of Shandong Province on the banks of the Yi river during the Chinese civil war between the CPC and KMT (1946-1949). It depicts how a young peasant woman in the base area of the Yimeng Mountains saves the life of a wounded soldier from the PLA. A wounded PLA platoon leader is lying unconscious dying of thirst. Unable to find him any water, the young woman, Ying Sao, feeds him with milk from her own breast. At this moment, the stage becomes bathed in a warm light, and singing from offstage begins: "The comradeship between the army and the people is loftier than the mountain, and milk is sweeter than water from the fountain". The breast milk revives the soldier and the young woman helps him to a cave to recuperate. Ying Sao is captured by the KMT enemies, cross examined and subjected to torture. They threaten to kill her new born baby. Ying Sao remains strong, withstands the ordeal and continues her everyday struggle until a contingent of PLA led armed peasants fight back and defeat the enemies oppressing the villagers. Much like *The White Haired Girl* which came before it, the ballet concludes to a red sun shining over the mountain village and the fully recovered platoon leader, re-joins his unit. This is a tale of the heroism of ordinary people; their resourcefulness and self-sacrifice, and the unity between the PLA and the people.

The scene where Ying Sao saves the soldier with milk from her own breast is particularly interesting within the framework of Alter's somatic nationalism. The ballet makes clear that this is a final act of sacrifice in a desperate situation; the last resort to revive the soldier with literally everything Ying Sao has. Within the context of a ballet as a genre, this act is surprising. One of the enduring characteristics of classical ballet is that it denies the

everyday functioning of the human body. Seemingly weightless dancers appear to defy gravity, they hide the pain and stress of demanding technical movements with pleasant expressions, and give the impression of everlasting stamina. Ballet typically secretes normal bodily functions and the excess the body produces. *Ode to the Yimeng Mountain* breaks this tradition, and although the actual act of expressing milk from the breast is hidden from the audience behind a large rock, the significance of the act is central and the acceptance of bodily materiality quite clear. Alter's conception links bodily virtuosity with nationalism and the virtuous qualities of the state. With Ying Sao giving of her body; her milk to the wounded soldier, she makes manifest the individual's bodily entanglement with the state. Her heroic self-sacrifice saves the soldier who is able to re-join his unit and continue to fight for the revolution. A feminist reading of this somatic metaphor might argue that it highlights the importance of a woman's reproductive potential, and her ability to service men, as central to her value to society. However, the metaphor also makes clear the importance of women to the revolution and necessity of all citizens to be self- sacrificing, resourceful and generous with all they have, for the benefit of the whole nation.

As with *The White Haired Girl*, Yimeng Mountain, incorporated Yangge folk dances and songs, and Chinese instrumentation in the score. Unlike this ballet and Red Detachment, however, the young heroine in Yimeng Mountain, does not leave her domestic/caring duties to personally fight for the revolution. She is an example of what Rosemary Roberts (2010: 73) calls a 'radicalised conventional figure'. She demonstrates to women all over China how they can support the cause whilst continuing to serve their families at home. As such, newspapers such as the Beijing Review (1975), hailed the work as a success as a fine example of revolutionising art.

> [O]ur literary and art workers have done their best to create new socialist and original proletarian works. This is a goal in creating China's socialist art of dancing and a task common to all other art forms undergoing a proletarian revolution. The efforts made in this respect by the artists in producing *Ode to the Yimeng Mountains* have the wholehearted support of the workers, peasants and soldiers (Anon, 1975, *Beijing Review*, [online]).

Post Cultural Revolution accounts suggest that the second generation of model works were not as successful as their earlier predecessors (Roberts, 2010; Clark, 2008).

5.3 Experience of the Cultural Revolution on Individuals in Ballet

Until this point, this and the previous chapter have focused on the effects of ideology and policy on the production and performance of ballets during in the Maoist era. However, the Cultural Revolution also had a devastating effect on individuals within the institution of ballet too. Dai Ailian who had been named director of the Central Ballet Company in 1963, was one such individual who was singled out by the CCP and subjected to horrendous treatment. Dai, a Trinidadian immigrant, who spoke heavily accented Chinese, was rare as an expert in a position of power who was not a member of the CCP. Prior to the start of the Cultural Revolution, Dai was being gradually side-lined as director of the ballet company, remaining director only in name. Jiang Qing was the self-appointed "standard- bearer of the proletarian arts and literature" (Liu, 2010: 379) and disapproved of the foreign and bourgeois Western ballets being performed. By 1966, Dai was forced to step aside and became increasingly isolated from the company.

> Although I was forced to step aside, at first I was not arrested. I was still allowed to sit at communal meetings of the Ballet Company, which were presided over by Madame Mao. One day I heard a tape recording of her screaming "why have you not yet touched Dai Ailian?" That was how she first denounced me. . . . from that day on they tried to isolate me. . . . I was also made to do manual work, cleaning out the ballet studios and the school dormitories. I was ordered to cut my long hair, and they threatened to shave my head if I did not cut my hair short myself (Dai in Glasstone, 2007: 64).

From 1968 onwards, millions of educated Chinese, mostly youths but also those considered counter revolutionaries or class traitors, were mobilised and sent 'up to the mountains and down to the villages'. This meant being forcibly sent to rural villages and frontier settlements to engage in hard, manual labour and re-education by poor peasants. Roughly ten percent of the urban population was relocated (Buckley, 2005).

In 1970 Dai was told that she was going to be sent to the countryside and to expect that she would be there for a long time. Initially Dai was sent to an experimental agricultural unit. At over 50 years of age, the management of the work unit felt she was too old to be assigned new or complex tasks to learn. She was forced to tidy the orchards, picking up leaves and twigs all day, carrying heavy loads in high temperatures outside in the fields. She was later sent to another farm with a Ballet Company unit of about thirty people including the

ballerina, Bai Shuxiang, the first Chinese Odette, and one of the choreographers of the Red Detachment, Jiang Zuhui.

> There I was made to weed the vegetable garden. It was winter: I caught cold and I was bed-ridden three times in one year. They accused me of pretending to be ill. They forced me to get up and made me climb the stairs. I was described as a monster and was sent off to look after the pigs. I liked my pigs. I collected swill from the kitchen to feed them. It had to be heated to a certain temperature and my hand got infected testing it (Dai in Glasstone, 2007: 64).

Once Jiang Qing had had the Ballet Company re-educated and re-organised along what she considered to be suitably proletarian lines, she issued Dai with a new menial task: to darn the pointe shoes for a tour of Red Detachment to communist Albania. This is a task which each dancer typically does for herself, a single pair over the course of pockets of downtime over several days. It is such a time-consuming chore, that very often dancers today simply cut the satin off the tops of their shoes, or some more modern shoes are made with suede patches over the block of the shoes. Dai recalled how she was tortured with this task, 'I was given a large pile of pointe shoes to darn and was forced to stay awake for several nights, until the job was done. All I was given to eat was a bowl of beans at midnight' (Dai in Glasstone, 2007: 66). This unusual torture was repeated so many times that Dai ended up with an injured shoulder from sewing.

In 1975 as some of the more severe aspects of the Cultural Revolution were being curtailed, Dai was granted permission to return to Beijing. She was ordered to return to the ballet department and the Beijing Dance School and asked to aid in coaching some of the ballet teachers. As a result of the ruling with an iron fist and systematic destruction of the ballet school and company by Jiang Qing, many of the teachers were listless and despondent, as a result there was inertia where there had been eager advancement in the years before the Cultural Revolution. Dai undertook this challenge with her characteristic cheer, happy to be back in the studio. Despite the most arduous challenges Dai did not complain, nor try to pull rank. "There's work to be done," she would say, "and someone has to do it; so why not us?" (Dai in Glasstone, 2007: 67).

5.4 The end of the Cultural Revolution

On 8th January 1976, Zhou Enlai died of bladder cancer. A week later Deng Xiaoping led Zhou's funeral attended by all of China's most senior politicians and leaders, with the notable absence of Mao himself, who had become increasingly critical of Zhou (Teiwes & Sun, 2004: 217). Following Zhou's death, Mao selected the relatively junior and unknown, Hua Guofeng as Premier. In so doing, he was overlooking both Deng Xiaoping and the members of the Gang of Four, who were worried that the widespread support Zhou had enjoyed, could turn against them after his death. In order to avoid this, the Gang of Four placed restrictions on overt displays of public mourning for Zhou. This fuelled an already bubbling rise in popular discontent against Mao and the Gang of Four.

On 9th September 1976, Mao Zedong died at the age of 82, four years after suffering a stroke. To Mao's supporters in much of China, the death of the leader was symbolic of the loss of the revolutionary foundation of Communist China and the nation descended into national grief and mourning. People wept in the streets and public institutions were closed for over a week. Following Mao's death, Jiang Qing and the Gang of Four retained control of the media, which presented many articles supposedly outlining principles established by Mao towards the end of his life. They warned that any revisionist who opposed these Maoist principles, would come to "no good end" (Baum, 1996: 40). The gang were increasingly radical and together with disgraced general of PLA, Lin Biao, who died in 1971, were labelled the two most significant "counter-revolutionary forces" in the Cultural Revolution and were blamed for the worst excesses of party, and the societal chaos which had ensured during the revolution.

Jiang Qing was diametrically opposed to Hua Guofeng (who was thought to be lacking in skill and ambition) insisted that she be named the new party Chairman. The Gang's radical interpretation of Maoist ideology and policy clashed with Hua, many influential senior party members as well as party reformers. On 10th October 1976, with the backing of the PLA, the Gang of Four was arrested in a bloodless coup just a month after Mao's death. Their downfall sparked major celebration on the streets of the capital and marked the end of the turbulent political era for China.

The cultural production in the ten years of the Cultural Revolution in China drew upon ideology generated at beginning of New China, but specifically since the Yan'an Forum more than thirty years earlier. Seeking to modernise China and traditional thinking and practices, and to learn from the West, the art that was generated during this period both reflect and create China's evolving global condition.

While the omnipresence of the model works during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution was fundamental to the widespread acceptance of the modernisation of artistic culture in China, it was ultimately responsible for the downfall of the works too. The well-worn repertoire with predictable narratives and character tropes became exhausted, empty symbols of political rhetoric. For ballet specifically however, the revolutionary period was essential. As this chapter has described, the successful indigenization of ballet during the Cultural Revolution allowed the new invention of Chinese-style ballet to flourish in China when other forms of culture and history were lost. Networks of dancers, teachers, choreographers, and directors were established, and individuals learnt their trade. Institutions instrumental to the survival and development of ballet such as training schools and professional companies were formed. Young children who had grown up with images of Qinghua pasted to the walls of their homes and villages aspired to dance in a form which was virtually unknown a mere twenty years earlier. The hybridity and intertexuality seen with Chinese folk, Opera, martial arts being combined with classical ballet as it had arrived from the Soviet Union, created a new style of performance fostering a sense of innovation that was both decidedly modern and uniquely Chinese. Chinese Ballet was now known to the entire population creating an appetite for the genre which was simply not present in the pre-revolutionary period. Following the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, these developments in ballet were not abandoned, instead they were built upon.

The next chapter endeavours to bridge the gap between the historical accounts and the modern day. Chapters three, four, and five describe the developments in the form that contributed to the establishment of ballet in China as essential and are foundational to the practice of the from as it is experienced today. The next chapter reflects the realities of training in the twenty-first century in the institutions which were established during the periods described in the previous sections. It focuses on the bodily experience of the

individual dancer within the institution, and makes use of the theoretical underpinnings identified in part one of the thesis to analyse how they are made manifest in the institution described in part two of the dissertation.

CHAPTER SIX: "She would come behind me and stretch my neck, pulling it up hard, away from my shoulders" ('Li', interview: 2015).

6.1 Creating a Dancer: Training the Body in China

> She would come up behind me and stretch my neck, pulling it up hard, away from my shoulders . . . She sat on my toes as I stretched them down to the floor . . . She pushed my back flat against the floor with her foot. I wanted to cry. I looked up at my mother who was watching the classes. She shook her head. No crying allowed. I was five. ('Li', Interview: 2015)

This chapter explores ballet training in the twenty-first century. It shows how the intuitions, processes and policies established during the periods described in the previous chapters are maintained and evolve in the modern era. At its centre, this chapter aims to illuminate the bodily experiences of the individual dancer, and makes use the theories of Bourdieu and Foucault explained in part one, to analyse how those techniques are made manifest within the institutional structures in China identified in the historical accounts in the dissertation.

Becoming a professional dancer in China is a long and arduous process. It is one of training and honing the body and mind. Beginning early, it is a journey in which children and young adults endure physical and psychological pain through a process of denial, discipline and repetition. Given that the average dancing career is fairly short, many dancers retire from the stage by their mid to late thirties, the time spent in intense training reflects a significant portion of their participation of the field. When a dancer leaves training, she has spent nearly half her life at ballet school. The social world of the ballet school is an example of 'structured structuring structures' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990a). The experience of training as a dancer is one also of identity building, of forming an appropriate habitus in order to succeed in the field. This chapter articulates the processes by which dancers are created in China. It is based on interviews conducted with approximately forty professional dancers and teachers from all over China, and observations at the Beijing Dance Academy, the Secondary School of the Beijing Dance Academy, the Shanghai University of Sport, the Shanghai Dance School (the secondary school of the Shanghai Theatre Academy), and the Shanghai Theatre Academy. The most substantial of these observations took place at the Shanghai Theatre Academy where I undertook an Arts and Humanities Research Council fellowship in the spring and summer of 2016. Here I observed classes in ballet technique,

pointe, pas de deux, and rehearsals for performances and competitions in professional students undertaking a highly competitive degree as ballet majors. I followed a class of second year girls (approximately 19 and 20 years of age) and a group of boys in their fourth and final year (approximately 21 years old) for a period of six weeks, watching classes nearly every day and attending examinations and performances regularly throughout my time in Shanghai. In addition to the prolonged observation, I watched classes and examinations in ballet, Chinese classical dance, choreography and contemporary at these other institutions when I was invited by a member of staff.

While this discussion is based most heavily on observations at the Shanghai Theatre Academy and the attached Shanghai Dance School, they are representative of much of the training at elite institutions in China. The Shanghai Dance School has produced many recent winners of prestigious ballet competitions such as the Prix de Lausanne and the Youth America Grand Prix. It is widely considered one of the top three institutions for ballet training in China (with perhaps the most prestigious being the Beijing Dance Academy). Dance training in China is comprehensively standardized, and as such, student dancers all over China have very similar experiences in training. Perhaps the most important reason for this standardisation stems from the conscious adoption of a professional training model which was developed for the state-sponsored dance schools when they were first established in the 1950s (outlined in chapter three). Prior to this, there was considerable diversity in the ways in which dancers trained, much of it very informal because dance as a legitimate profession had not existed in China for about a millennium (Wilcox, 2011). Following the establishment of the Beijing Dance School in 1954, pedagogical curricula and an organisation model was developed that was adopted by the second professional school, the Shanghai Dance School. This became the standard model of professional dance training. Graduates of the Beijing Dance School were sent all over the country to transmit the curricula and training methods they learnt to local schools and work as teachers. It was not many years before most regional schools had one or more graduates from the Beijing Dance School teaching. The attached touring companies also performed all over China, and during the Cultural Revolution taught the sanctioned repertoire to local performing troupes and regional schools. As such, the practices developed in 1954 in Beijing and refined over the next few years, became the standard model of dance training in China which largely still

exists today. The Beijing Dance Academy publishes many teaching materials, runs courses for teachers, and has an incremental teaching syllabus (much like the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) or the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) in the UK), which is adopted by many regional institutions. Many of the teachers I interviewed in regional schools had trained at the Beijing Dance Academy or affiliate secondary school. Furthermore, when conducting interviews, I was struck by the similarity of the experiences of the dancers, a quality which remained when I examined dance training across multiple generations.

Measuring the Capital: Selection

Many of the dancers I interviewed during my fieldwork began dancing in their hometowns in local, amateur settings in youth centres or in small private studios, but their professional training in well-known institutions began as children stood in their underwear in bare feet in a studio, being measured before a panel of judges. Before a student can be admitted to a top tier professional ballet school such as the Secondary School of the Beijing Dance Academy or the Shanghai Dance School, she must undergo an audition. The most important criteria for selection is to have the correct physical proportions and anatomic potential. Yao, a former dancer with Stuttgart Ballet and final year boys' teacher at the Shanghai Theatre Academy described the physical 'qualifications' (*tiaojian* [条件]) needed to be accepted into the school aged eight.

> We take a tape measure and measure the child's legs, they need to be *at least* [his emphasis] 13 cm longer that the length of their torso. We want shorter torso. Long arms. The arms finger to finger need to be longer than the full height like this [holds his arms out to the side of his body to show wingspan]. They need a long neck, a small head. Then we look at everything. The condition of their body. How thin they are. Do they have a beautiful face? The feet, feet with a lot of arch, flexible ankles, back, turnout at their hips. (Teacher Yao, Interview: 2016).

Following this measurement, he continued to describe a series of physical tests used to scrutinize the anatomical suitability of the child. With one hand on the barre, the teacher conducting the examination lifts the child's leg into a high arabesque to assess the flexibility of the back, the teacher will pull the child's leg up the side of her body, as close to her ear at possible. The child's feet are molded into a fully pointed position, the legs turned out at the

hip joint to assess turnout. The final test is of the depth of a child's demi-plie (an assessment of the length of the Achilles' tendon) and a few jumps in first position to gage the child's sense of *ballon*. The children have to show a willing and amenable attitude at this stage, alongside an ability to ignore the pain being inflicted by their teacher (Yao, interview: 2016). Each of these attributes are awarded a score and the scores are totaled. Only those with the highest scores are admitted to the school. Xin Lili, the director of Shanghai Ballet suggested that the ratio of accepted students to applicants at the most prestigious schools was 1:1000 (Xin, Interview: 2016). A large minority of the students who audition for dance schools, do so without any prior dance training. Not having prior dance experience is not a barrier to admission. Indeed teacher Yao suggested that a child with excellent body proportions without dance training would be preferable because she would be considered a 'blank canvas', a malleable body which can be trained correctly from scratch rather than having to re-educate the body and unlearn bad habits from poor, local training.

To continue with our Bourdieusian framework for understanding how bodies are created and exist in the world, we need to consider the social field in which ballet dancers operate. For Bourdieu each field is a semi-autonomous arena in which individuals are able to manipulate the variety of means available to them in order to compete for status. As described in the first chapter, Bourdieu uses the term *capital* not in a Marxist economic sense, but rather to define the capacity to wield power in a particular field. The concentration and type of capital defines social trajectory in the field.

Central to Bourdieu's writing was the relationship between different types of capital: economic, social, cultural and perhaps most central to our analysis, physical capital. Bourdieu noted that economic capital is at the root of all modern societies, therefore he deemed it the most efficient capital and the most readily converted to social power and advantage. However, Bourdieu suggested that economic capital must be symbolically mediated or we would expose the arbitrary nature of the distribution and reproduction of economically determined power and wealth. Bourdieu argued that symbolic capital functions to legitimate the inequitable stratification of power by essentialising and naturalising a hierarchy of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1979). The body itself has a physical capital which is powerful in specific fields. Young dancers are in the process of acquiring a

ballet dancer's habitus as well as the physical, cultural and social capital which will allow them to succeed in the field. It is through the process of training that the dancer will cultivate these types of capital. Some elements of physical capital deemed necessary for success in ballet today, a dancer cannot develop no matter how much training she undertakes. These are the physical attributes that Teacher Yao identified above. Many of these are genetic dispositions and are considered an essential pre-requisite to create an elite dancer in China.

For older students entering training at tertiary level aged eighteen at institutions such as the Beijing Dance Academy or the Shanghai Theatre Academy enrolling in a dance degree[27] a professional standard of previous dance training is essential. This is a separate type of physical and cultural capital in the form of technical – artistic expertise. Dancers with the most overall physical capital, a combination of the best physical condition (*tiaojian* [条件]) and a high level of proficiency in dance wield the most power in the field and are most likely to be accepted to the most prestigious schools. There are typically between 12 and 16 students accepted at each level in the dance department, so competition is fierce. The older students attending university also need a passing result in the National Higher Education Entrance Examination, commonly known as the *gaokao* [高考]or "high exam". This is a form of cultural capital which is considered significantly less important than the physical capital outlined above. As the students are considered to have specialist skills, the entrance tariff needed for acceptance is relatively lower than other universities. In fact, many of my interviewees suggested that their academic education at vocational secondary school was limited and in their final year they had been given a short period of study leave in which to cram for the *gaokao*.

Since these institutions are state funded, it is likely that only the very poorest of admitted students would be unable to attend due to economic constraints. However, there are other economic considerations at the time of audition. Many of those I interviewed confided that it had been necessary to provide a bribe for the audition panel of teachers at the school.

27 Although these are degrees are taught in university settings, and the institutions are very large in scale, these programmes are vocational training and highly competitive, more similar to training in conservatories in the UK than university-based dance departments.

This was confirmed by several teachers working in professional schools and universities (although all suggested this corruption happened at institutions other than their own and none admitted to personally benefitting). An article in the in the *New York Times* (2015) confirms that bribery is a common problem in the admission process in higher education. In December 2015 the former admission director for Beijing's RenMin University, Cai RongSheng confessed in court in Nanjing to accepting bribes. Mr Cai admitted to accepting 23.3 million RMB (approximately £2.6 million) between 2005 and 2013 to help 44 students gain admission or to allow accepted students to change their major.

'Mei', a dancer who entered the dance department at a top tier university told me that during her preparations for her auditions, she was informed by her ballet teacher who had connections on the university panel that a bribe would be expected for all applicants who were invited to a final round audition. She was told by her teacher to give the equivalent of £10,000 in cash in a red envelop known as a *hongbao* [紅包] to a specialist third party agent who was coordinating the applicants auditions at various dance institutions. Mei suggested this was a typical and expected part of the audition process in the final round. She noted that all applicants who made it to the final audition had given money to the panel; that it would be highly unlikely that an applicant could be offered a place if they did not engage in this process. She suggested that some applicants without the means to give large sums in cash gave instead expensive gifts to the teachers. These were most often luxury Western branded items, such as expensive handbags, wallets or watches. The Head of Dance at a top university, 'Chen Yue' told me about a rival institution, "It started with small gifts, a watch, or a handbag, but then the competition got bigger, now it's car keys or even apartment keys". This corruption is of course, against the official policy of the institution, and more importantly, the law, however it appears to have been completely normalised amongst those training and working in education.

It has been noted (see Lee, 1990; Sands, 1990; Liew, 1993; Manion, 1996) that in China, the transition from a centralised socialist bureaucratic planning to more decentralised, and somewhat marketized economy in the Reform and Open Era China has been characterised by a large growth in economic corruption. This system of bribery is a practice connected to gift exchange which occurs in nearly all societies. Bourdieu's analysis of gift exchange

follows closely the discussion outlined in Marcel Mauss' classic study (1954). For Mauss, the practice of gift giving in both theory and form is "voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous" (Mauss, 1954: 1). Yet, the giving of gifts creates obligatory relationships in which the recipient must reciprocate or be considered in subordinate position (Bourdieu, 1977:195). Thus there is a contradiction between the spontaneous, disinterested generosity and the resultant binding obligation which is rarely formally acknowledged by either participants. This contradiction is at the heart of Bourdieu's analysis. He suggests that the manner of giving must be such that the outward expression of the act practically confers a denial of the content and intention of the act. Bourdieu refers to this contradiction as 'misrecognition' (Bourdieu, 1977:194). Without this misrecognition, the intention to oblige the other becomes immediately apparent and the gift is no longer what it is alleged to be (Bourdieu, 1977: 5-6). For the process to function, both agents must outwardly reject to concede the actuality of their exchange.

This misrecognition was not the case in the students and teachers I studied. In the case of the gifts offered during the audition process, gift exchange is not dependent on an outward denial of the possibility of instrumental use, but rather a strategic recognition of the power of gift exchange to obligate or influence the audition panel (or, at the very least, the knowledge that if they failed to engage with gift giving, they would be automatically eliminated from the possibility of selection). The acknowledgement of the instrumental nature of gift giving in this field, challenges Bourdieu's analysis in which he insists that the agents must refuse to acknowledge the "truth of their exchanges" (Bourdieu, 1977: 194). Mauss made this point rather more strongly, suggesting that when gift giving "is carried out in a different spirit, for immediate gain, it is viewed with the greatest disdain" (1954: 36). While I think that most Chinese subject to this system understand the inherent inequity, and would rather gifts be unnecessary, I perhaps suggest that they are less outraged than their Western counterparts might be because this practice is one facet of a much older network of relations and favours in China known as *guanxi* [關係]. *Guanxi*, originating in Confucian philosophy stressing social hierarchy, describes the social networks of influence in relationships. These are built on pre-existing relationships with classmates, people from the same hometown, family members, colleagues in the workplace, membership to organisations and so forth. Guanxi is developed through the exchange of gifts, trading

favours, through spending social time together in banquets, drinking parties and karaoke (K-TV). The art of guanxi "lies in the skilful mobilization of moral and cultural imperatives such as obligation and reciprocity in pursuit of both diffuse social ends and calculated instrumental ends" (Yang, 1989: 35).

Building guanxi is very important in business and this practice has migrated to education, particularly in highly competitive environments. In conducting my fieldwork in China, I engaged in my own guanxi building exercises. I brought gifts from England to give to all the high-status individuals I interviewed and made sure to show appropriate gratitude for their time. Cultivating good relationships proved to be crucial in being granted access and time to interview very influential individuals. I was able to meet with the directors and former directors of major companies due to guanxi. In organising a meeting with Madam Zhao Ruheng in Beijing (when I was living in Shanghai, over six hours away by bullet train), teacher 'Yue Mei' informed me that, "you should jump when she says jump, if you can build guanxi with her, your work will be much easier" (personal communication, 2016). This proved to be true when Madam Zhao arranged the museum and archive at the headquarters of the National Ballet of China to be opened and private tour given to me. At Madam Zhao's request, the company's tour manager spent many hours explaining the key archival objects and allowed me to take photographs of rare materials. The guanxi was later called upon and favour reciprocated when teacher 'Yue Mei' asked me about the progress of a Chinese student who was studying at an institution in London, and I was happily able to provide her with the update.

The concept of guanxi can be further explained by highlighting the link between guanxi and the notion of 'face' (*mianxi* [面子]). Anthropologist Mayfair Yang states that the art of guanxi "aims at building symbolic capital" (1989: 46). In China, the symbol capital is characterised in one guise as 'face'. By increasing an individual's face, he or she "becomes the moral and symbolic superior of the recipient and can thus subject the latter to his or her will" (ibid: 43). These kind of guanxi and face building practices serve to boost the symbolic capital of individuals in a specific field. Guanxi is a long-term investment, and many of my interviews maintained close relationships with their former teachers, and classmates for their entire lives.

American Sinologist Dorothy Solinger suggests that there is a tendency in the understanding of many Chinese people to equate bribery with an exchange of money. Solinger argues that in socialist China, following many years of anticapitalist rhetoric, people bribe with gifts more often than with money arguing that there is no wrongdoing if no cash changes hands (1984:57). What begins as a bribe during the audition might later become gifts, especially as a student progresses through her training and wishes to be granted access to opportunities such as performances and competitions.

During my observations I noted that there was one considerably weaker student in one of the classes at a prestigious university. Unlike the other students, he did not possess the same physical capital in terms of body proportion and inherent facility for ballet and was much technically weaker. I asked the class teacher about the student. “Ah, that student’s parents are very rich. They know the Principal well” (Teacher ‘Ming’, personal communication: 2016). This demonstrates that guanxi, face, forms of symbolic capital were as important as physical capital and actual technical ability in the audition field.

‘Li’, a dancer trained in Shanghai, told me about the proud day her acceptance letter to a top ballet school arrived. Before the moment, she had no desire to become a dancer. She had never seen a ballet, had no real understanding of the nature of professional training, having taken only local “dance and gymnastics” classes once a week at a local recreation centre. Being accepted into the prestigious school was a point of much celebration for her family. She saw herself then as someone special, as someone possessing the correct “raw materials” (*cailiao* [材料]) which might convert her into the elegant, sophisticated and charismatic dance teachers on the audition panel. ‘Li’’s description of herself as possessing the essential “raw materials” is analogous with Bourdieu’s conception of the capital necessary in order to develop the appropriate habitus. This is the starting point in a long and hard road to becoming a dancer.

6.2 Training

Students who enter a professional dance school aged between nine and twelve make dramatic changes in their lives. Many move hundreds, even thousands of miles from home,

leaving their families and friends to live at the institution and study full time. Most students only return home once or twice a year. They engage in intensive vocational training focused on developing the student's physical capabilities, honing a very specific bodily form, increasing strength, stamina, flexibility, and acquiring and perfecting technical ballet-specific skills. The social environment has the creation of this body as the primary goal, and as such all daily activities are targeted towards this aim.

The students typically live in dormitories on campus where they have little personal space or concession to privacy. Student are divided by gender into dormitories sleeping between four and eight students in a room. Each student has a bunk bed and a chest of drawers shared with another student. There is typically a desk and chair in the room. The rooms are small, sparsely decorated and crowded with the students' possessions. There are shared toilets with sinks where students brush their teeth and wash their clothes in sinks. There is typically a shower block, although these are often in another building or on a different floor. Students wear dressing gowns, pyjamas or a T-shirt, and carry little boxes and bags of toiletries across the campus to have a shower.

There is typically a separate building for the classrooms for academic work, also housing a library and computer room, and offices. There is a large dining hall, filled with tables and chairs to seat many hundreds of students and staff where the students will eat all of their meals. The dance studios are usually in their own building. In the institutions where I was conducting fieldwork, each floor was devoted to a separate genre and student's majoring in that discipline. There were typically a floor for Chinese folk (ethnic) dance (*minzu wudao* [民族舞蹈]), Chinese classical dance, choreography, ballroom, and ballet. Each level had multiple large studios with dance floors, barres, mirrors and a piano. Compared to any of the professional ballet schools in the UK, the scale of the institution in considerably larger in China. The Beijing Dance Academy, for example, has six floors of studios, with each floor containing six well-proportioned studios. I was told by an administrator that the studios are at roughly 60% occupation at any one time. The Beijing Dance Academy has approximately 500 members of staff, 2,000 students with about 60 international students largely from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. When this is contrasted against ballet schools in the UK,

which have student bodies of one or two hundred, and are composed of a highly international mix of dancers, Chinese institutions seem somewhat like homogenous factories in the business of producing elite dancers.

Each day for a student in training commences at around 6:30 am and finishes around 9pm. From the beginning of their training the young dancers experience exhaustion, pain, boredom, and exhilaration in an ongoing battle for physical dexterity and the accumulation of capital. Three days a week at roughly 7:15 am the students begin their day by running laps around an outdoor track to increase cardiovascular fitness and stamina, raise core temperature and warm up the muscles and joints for the day of classes ahead. Following this run, all students engage in morning basic drills tailored to their major performed daily and considered essential to develop and maintain strength, flexibility, stamina and fitness. Similar to military drills, these consist of a variety of exercises each with precise goals to target a specific area of a dancer's physical condition. Examples include: running in a circle with high knee lifts, running with heels tapping bottom, various static explosive jumping exercises, jumps from standing in tucked and split positions, sit ups in a variety of positions, and stretching. One particularly impressive and alarming stretch, required the dancer to stand in the narrow gap between the barre and wall, and bend backwards hanging over the barre and attempt to touch the back of their heads to their bottoms. The students also practised *grand battements en croix* with the arms reaching upwards, the aim to hit one's hand with one's foot. Dancers perform slow *battement long* raising the leg slowly *devant*, *a la seconde* and into *arabesque*. They engaged in many other extreme stretching exercises: pulling the leg to the side of the body with the opposite arm, sitting in splits position with one or both of the legs propped up off the floor at various heights to achieve an 'over-splits' position.

(xiv) A student at the Shanghai Dance School stretching during morning drills, June 2016

The teacher resembled a drill sergeant barking instructions, and a near constant commentary on the students' performances and physical characteristics. "Jump higher! Higher! Wider legs! HIGHER! Good. Jump.! Jump! Jump higher!". Despite the obvious effort, the students are red faced and dripping with sweat, they do not utter a single sound. The dancer's body, her muscles, joints, bones are fatigued, her lungs pounding in her chest, screaming at her to stop. However, it is in reaching this space of near maximum effort, of pushing the boundaries of what feels physically possible, that the dancer is honing and expanding her abilities. I was told by many students that the teacher only attends these drills for the first year or two of training. In the third year, the assigned Class Monitor put the class through their paces. The teacher threatens to attend in random spot checks. There is danger of punishment if the students do not attend this session or perform poorly with minimal effort. It is unlikely that students will fail to work to their full potential or change themselves. The voice of the teacher shouting instructions in the first and second year,

becomes internalised and the student generates this commentary silently for themselves, expertly monitoring and analysing phenomenological sensation, and the outward manifestation of the body's performance. Her performance is measured against her previous performance, the performance of her peers, that of professional dancers, and the abstract ideal that forms the basis of classical technique. This strict monitoring ensures that the dancer is always discipling herself, correcting mistakes and striving for more. The dancer's identity and self-worth are intrinsically linked to her physical capital which itself is measured against her ability to perform these feats of technical virtuosity and how her body looks while completing them. There is not opportunity to relax one's efforts.

Many dancers I spoke to engaged in extreme measures to try and improve their physical capital. One dancer told me that when the students were very young, a girl in her dormitory was desperate to increase her hamstring flexibility necessary to achieve very high leg extensions. The young girl asked her peers to place tapes around her ankles and tie them to the bedpost. One at the foot of the bed, and one at the head to achieve a split position. The next morning, the young girl was in terrible pain, unable to move, frozen with one leg over her head. She was carried into the shower in this position by her friends, who used the warm water to gently easy her muscles back into place ('Xue', interview: 2015).

There are many horror stories such as this, most told with faint amusement rather than concern. These stories were common place experiences, and regarded as normal, the dancers desensitised to the abuses their bodies ritually endured. This is viewed as a necessary sacrifice and one that will make the dancer stronger, both mentally and physically.

During my observations in China, I noted that the teachers used much more frequent, and in some instances forceful, hands-on physical correction than I had ever witnessed in training the UK, and more than I use in my own teaching. Hands-on physical correction is used to encourage and engrain technically correct posture, still positions and movement, by creating the physical sensation *for* the dancer. Once physically manipulated into the correct position, the dancer can feel the sensation of the body performing accurately. This helps to ingrain motor learning, commonly described as 'muscle memory', a form of procedural

memory involving consolidating a specific motor task into memory through repetition until it can be performed without conscious effort. Limbs were smacked, legs wrenched skyward, and backs pulled upwards by disapproving teachers. Many students recalled instances of being forcefully stretched by their teachers.

> I couldn't get my splits to the side. [Gestures to a seconde, or 'box-split' sideways position]. I was this far off the floor [hold out hands, suggesting a foot or so]. The teacher told me that everyone had to do it. She stood with her weight on my back with both feet and pressed my body into the floor. It was so painful. I cried a large pool on the studio floor. I couldn't really close my legs for the next three days. I did this everyday, crying every time, and in a week or two, I could do my splits. I can still do them now ('Zhang', interview: 2014).

'Zhang's' final comments – that she did and can still do the splits – is indicative of an instrumental approach to the body. She was implying that the results justified the means, that the capital was amassed regardless of the pain (even injury) caused in the process. Many dancers praised their teachers for using harsh methods, suggesting that is was necessary to produce good dancers. In many instances, students suggested that it was worse to be ignored by a teacher because that insinuated the teacher did not think a student worth their time and effort correcting. Bai Dingkai, a former winner of the Prix de Lausanne competition who used his scholarship to attend the Royal Ballet School, compared the teaching methods he received in London with his experiences at the Shanghai Dance School.

> I wish the teachers at the Royal would correct me the way they used to in China. The teachers here are so nice, so encouraging. It makes me think that I'm doing good. I can see in the mirror that I'm not. Not like in China. The teacher would tell me that I was terrible, worthless, and it pushed me to work harder. I was afraid, I hated my teacher, I would cry at night, but I knew that he was saying that to make me better, to improve my dancing and make my spirit strong. Ballet is hard and they need to make you ready for that (Bai, interview: 2017)

Many of my interviewees used the Chinese idiom, "harsh teachers produce outstanding students" [严师出高徒]. While it was undoubtly true that the students I observed were working extremely hard, I wondered if the students' fear of their teacher or punishment for poor performance, motivating factors extrinsic to the student, would transform effectively

into hard working professional dancers. In a professional ballet company, dancers are typically more autonomous and need to be intrinsically motivated, pushing themselves to continue to improve over many years of employment where there are infrequent chances for promotion. The reward for hard work must be an enjoyment of the processes, a love of dancing, and a feeling of accomplishment at often minor incremental improvement.

Many students I spoke with suggested that because they had trained in ballet at such intensity for so many years, that it had been necessary to limit other activities and avenues of development. Moreover, dancers often suggested that their academic studies had been minimal, and worried that they lacked the skills to work in another field if dancing professionally was not a feasible option. This feeling that the dancers had no other option but to dance, was manifest in a deep commitment, to the exclusion of nearly everything else, to their training. In this way, commitment to ballet is not, as it might be viewed in the other contexts, a result of a profound passion or feeling of vocation for an art form, but instead developing physical capital and bodily virtuosity was matter of personal livelihood.

6.3 Discipline

In *Discipline and Punish* (1979 [1975]) Foucault examines the disciplinary techniques used on soldiers to create docile bodies during military training. Foucault describes the bodies of early 17th century soldiers as a model for bodily cultivation, honor and respect. He highlights a bodily way of being:

> the signs for recognizing this profession are a lively, alert manner, an erect head, taut stomach, broad shoulders, long arms, strong fingers, a small belly, thick thighs, slender legs and dry feet, because a man of such a figure could not fail to be agile and strong . . . By the late eighteenth century, the solider has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed: posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently in the automatism of habit; in short, one has 'got rid of the peasant' and given him 'the air of a soldier' (ordinance of 20 March 1764) (1979 [1975]: 135).

Foucault concludes that "the classical age discovered the body as object and target of power' (ibid: 136). He notes how institutions such as the military, schools, prisons and

hospitals use strategies and techniques to manipulate the body, suggesting that "a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (ibid). The scale of control and techniques exercised in each institution was differentiated and individualized. The mechanism of control was at the level of the individual, operated upon the "movements, gesture, and attitudes' (ibid: 137) of the body. Foucault highlighted how the disciplinary techniques exercised upon the body before this period were publicly brutal punishment and displays of authority. The development of the disciplinary techniques enacted on the bodies of the individual imposed in more modern societies is a subtler form of control, but constitutes constant coercion and manipulation.

> The historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, nor at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely (ibid: 138).

Rather than the object of control being elements of behaviour- the result and products of practices and activity- uninterrupted, constant coercion supervises the *processes* of practices, reorganizing the body in its movement, presentation, use of space and time in order to ensure meticulous control. A calculated manipulation of the body ensure that the power exercised on others operates in two manners; not only that they do as one wishes, but that the disciplined conducts himself in the manner in which the other dictates, with the speed, efficiency, methods and techniques employed pre-determined. Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced 'docile' bodies.

Discipline increases the utility of the body at the same time as diminishing some of its capacity, therefore the body becomes at once more powerful, and more obedient. Docility produces bodies which are highly skilled and capable but stifles the power that might arise from the result, so this increased ability leads to increased domination.

The training of bodily virtuosity in the ballet school institution is ripe ground for a Foucauldian analysis. While there is some physical manipulation of the dancer, this is, for the most part, not punishment, but instead a method to ensure that the dancer is able to recognize her own limitations in movement, surveil her own body and make appropriate

corrections. Ballet training is a practice which requires the implementation of a system (a pre-determined technique) which necessitates constant surveillance of not only what the body is doing in the most minute detail, but also how the body is performing. The creation of docility in dance students ensures that they not only become powerful and efficient technicians, it also ensures the enculturation in the norms and behaviours of the institution. Thus, dancers are powerful docile bodies with exact control over their bodily virtuosity, but they are simultaneously subdued and dominated.

There were some stark examples of disciplinary techniques uncovered during interviews with my interlocutors and observations at ballet training institutions. Perhaps most obviously, the degree of surveillance of the individual body is almost constant. Dancers in training spend many hours a day in very little clothing watching their own reflection closely in mirrors. Drawing on the design of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, Foucault noted that one of techniques of disciplinary practice is the continuous hierarchical surveillance and continuous supervision. Although there may not be anyone observing, the internalisation of continuous supervision ensures that dancers are self-surveilling. This was demonstrated in the basic training at the start of each day whereby it was not necessary for a teacher to attend because the students self-monitored. The organisation in space, of dancers in neat rows, each able to see the teacher and accompanist as well as the mirror, compounded this feeling of constant surveillance. Foucault describes the cellular partitioning of space as one of the disciplinary mechanisms enacted by institutions. The space between dancers in the studio allows for the teacher to move easily between students, viewing the body from many different perspectives and ensures that the students self-discipline as they are aware they are always visible from all angles.

Almost every class I observed in China had the class organised in space according to performance ability. While in most classes I teach and watch in the UK the students decide where they would like to stand, which varies to greater or lesser extents daily, but in China, this was pre-determined. The most able student would be in the downstage row in the centre, with the next best performing students to either side. These students were placed so as to be observed more closely by the teacher than their classmates. This added layer of competition contributed to the self-surveillance. Students are able to evaluate their own

performance in relation to their most successful peers in a clear visual hierarchy in the room. This compounded the pressure placed on the most able students, as standing in the most exposed positions meant they endure the most precise and exacting scrutiny.

The dancers also engaged in surveillance of their bodies outside of the ballet studio. Before several classes, I watched dancers weigh themselves in the studio. When I asked one student why they did this, she reported, "the ballet teacher is really strict, if we get fat, we can't dance" ('Lei', interview: 2016). Far from fat, without exception the dancers were incredibly lean. When I delicately asked the students about this, they responded matter-of-factly, "you can fly higher if you weigh less – you don't want to dance on a full stomach" ('Lei', interview: 2016). Being disciplined in one's appetite, gaining control of one's wills and desires is one essential aspect of the complete mastery of the body that needs to be achieved to be a professional dancer. While dancers are chosen at audition as children for their slender physiques, as puberty begins the body starts to change, dancers may struggle to maintain thinness. Monitoring the form of the body and regulating the diet is not a feature of ballet training unique to China – dancers all over the world engage in extreme and unhealthy behaviours to achieve a particular weight – however, I noticed this quite acutely in my observations. While the ordinary adult Chinese non-dancers seemed to me thinner on average than many in West, the dancers in particular seemed thinner than many dancers in the UK. As a student dancer in professional training, I weighed between 55 and 58 kilograms at 167 centimetres tall. When I observed a group of students weighing themselves before class, the heaviest of the dancers weighed a mere 46 kilograms.

Dancers described elaborate strategies for redirecting their hunger. One told me that she always missed breakfast, because if she ate in the morning she would feel hungry by lunchtime, but if she omitted her morning meal, she was able to go until dinner before consuming anything at all ('Shi Yi', interview: 2015). Another told me that she often slept during lunchtime so that she could more easily skip a meal unnoticed. Indeed, sleeping was mentioned on multiple occasions: "if I feel hungry at night, I'll drink some tea and go to sleep. Sometimes I wake up at night from the hunger, but mostly, I can sleep more" ('Pei Wen', interview: 2016). 'Pei Wen's' friend commented that she would eat a small bowl of vegetables at lunchtime and then immediately brush her teeth as a way to avoid getting

'carried away' and eating too much or consuming more calorific foods. One professional dancer described the feeling of hunger she experienced as a teenager at school as a near constant sensation, "it is like a dull ache every day, a feeling like you're hollow on the inside, empty, but somehow the emptiness feels heavy, it stretches deep inside you" ('Ting', 2015: interview).

Another disciplinary procedure outlined by Foucault is what he describes at the "body-object articulation" (Foucault, 1997 [1975]: 151). Although he was specifically discussing soldiers learning to wield and manipulate an object such as a rifle as one process in creating a docile body, it is possible to conceive of the slim, beautiful and virtuosic body as the essential tool or object for being a professional ballet dancer. Thus the constant monitoring and precise control of this tool is fundamentally necessary for it to be articulated fully in the performance of ballet. As previously noted, the dancer's body is both the subject and objects of ballet, thus learning to overcome bodily desires such as appetite, hunger, fatigue, pain and boredom in addition to discipline to learn and maintain the technical skills necessary perform competently might be considered the "body-object articulation" disciplinary technique Foucault highlighted as a process in creating the docile body.

As well as surveillance in the dance studios in class time, I also noticed students were monitored and coached during their evenings and weekends by their teachers via social media messaging platforms. While the students complained that their teachers were very strict, they also appeared to have very close relationships with them. It was common for students to receive social media messages from teachers after school hours informing them of logistical arrangements for classes and occasionally reminding them of technical and artistic corrections ahead of performances and competitions. There is typically a sense of distance between a teacher and her students in ballet schools in the UK[28], and I have never experienced a teacher text messaging her students as this might imply a familiarity deemed inappropriate. The distance was often lesser between the younger Chinese teachers (those

28 In making a comparison with my own experience training, dancing and teaching in the UK I do not wish to imply that one system's approaches are 'better' or 'worse'. There are many strengths of each system. Rather, I make relative comparisons from my experience to highlight which practices to an outsider to dance institutions might be considered typical or commonplace, are actually unique to the Chinese iteration of ballet training.

in their 30s) and the older students. I very often saw informal messages and comments on the social media platform WeChat (*weixin* [微信]) written by teachers remarking on the posts by students such as the one below, joking about a student's attempt at an impressive and technically challenging virtuosic jump as "hahaha, not bad, but showing off", and the student replying "it's my day off…" ((xv.) screenshot from WeChat 19/7/18 reproduced with permission from both parties (names redacted)).

Even in their 'free time' the surveillance of the students was unrelenting, invading even their digital presence and identity.

Foucault highlighted another set of disciplinary techniques. Increasingly managing the "control of activity" (Foucault, 1997 [1975]: 149) aimed at creating docile bodies. Developed in monasteries, Foucault noted how timetabling- the monitoring, dividing and recording of temporal space ensures that bodies are controlled physically, they are in the 'correct' place, performing the 'correct' activity at any given moment with no opportunity for deviation. There is ultimate order. It also ensures time is made useful with no 'waste', so bodies become maximumly productive. The lives of dancers are highly timetabled, the day is divided and subdivided into different studio classes, cross training sessions, academic

lessons and rehearsals. There is limited 'free time' in which the dancers could engage in activities which might hurt the cultivation of their docile, virtuosic activity.

In addition to daily timetabling, there are syllabi which aim to place a timeframe on the creation of a docile body. Students are regularly assessed in their technical and artistic progression, and if they are not developing quickly enough or cannot reach technical virtuosity and docility at the appropriate point in time, may be asked to leave the school. Foucault called this "the temporal elaboration of the act" (ibid). Time is penetrating the body, classifying and ordering the body in a meticulous control of power.

The teaching of classical ballet technique in the way the syllabus develops gradually over time, with a focus on repetition to ensure efficient learning, and increasing difficulty to ensure constant engagement and ceaseless pressure to strive towards an ever moving goal, is illustrative of a process Foucault called "the organization of geneses" (Foucault, 1997 [1975]: 161). Foucault suggested that the body is engaged in a continuous battle to advance using a "technique by which one imposes on the body tasks that are both repetitive and different, but always graduated" (ibid). This is reflected in the structure of the daily class that dancers perform throughout their training and careers. The set arrangement of the vocabulary is at once the same and different. The patterns of the *enchaînements* are different every day, which ensure the dancers are always fully engaged in the learning task, however they are repetitive in structure, every class will begin with a *plié* and end with the dancer flying through the air in a *grand allegro enchaînement*. Foucault suggested that this process "break[s] down time into separate and adjusted threads" and then "organize[s] these threads according to an analytical plan" (Foucault, 1997 [1975]: 158). Students are continually monitored, assessed and evaluated which "will have the triple function of showing whether the subject has reached the level required, of guaranteeing that each subject undergoes the same apprenticeship and of differentiating the abilities of each individual" (ibid). This is something I saw often in China. The students were differentiated according to ability in fairly glaring ways. On one occasion I was invited to watch final year students participate in a workshop given by a Chinese dancer who is a current member of Nederlands Dans Theatre. There was much excitement amongst the students who asked to take their photograph with the guest teacher as they were warming up. As the workshop

was about to begin, it was decided the studio was slightly too small to accommodate all the students in the year group. Therefore the regular class teacher selected the students she felt were the weakest in the class and told them before the entire room of their peers that they were not able to participate and that they should get dressed and watch the workshop sat on the floor at front of the studio. There was clear disappointment, but the students did as they were instructed. This kind of overt display of differentiation is what Foucault described when he wrote, "lay down for each individual . . . the exercise suited to him . . . Thus each individual is caught up in a temporal series which specifically defines his level of his rank" (Foucault, 1997 [1975]: 158-159). Similarly, when the students undertook assessments and examinations, the students' numerical results would be posted on the wall outside the studio in a list ranking the top achieving student to the lowest in a public visual reminder of the student's position. These public displays of student achievement served to foster an environment of competition and create a rivalry for the teacher's attentions amongst other tensions such as intimidation, frustration, isolation and diminished self-confidence. It is in these secondary effects of dance training in which the docile body at once produces a competent virtuosic technician, whilst simultaneously increasing obedience, and diminishing self-confidence and awareness of one's own power and ability to execute it. Disciplined bodies are highly skilled, subjected and dominated.

The most extreme example of the discipline enacted on students in the pursuit of producing docile bodies in dance training was described by a student who trained in Chinese classical dance at the People's Liberation Army dance school, more formally titled The Military and Cultural Institute of National Defense University, People's Liberation Army (*Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun guofang daxue junshi wenhua xueyuan*) [中国人民解放军国防大学军事文化学院]. She told me that prior to beginning their dance training as young children (aged eleven) the students had to undergo compulsory army training for a period of three weeks. 'Zhou' was actually two years younger than her classmates, entering fulltime training aged just nine. She was accepted at this young age because she was tall, taller than her older peers, and showed considerable talent, ambition and desire to enter training. It is compulsory for all students in China to undergo some elements of military training in schools and universities, most commonly at some point during junior high school, upon

entering senior high school and at the beginning of university. Student typically spent two to three weeks in a camp designed for military training. The National Defense Education Law states that one goal of the military training is to develop "patriotic enthusiasm" (Zhang, 2012: 888). The students spend this time as soldiers do, living in barracks, dressed in army fatigues following a strict timetable of drill practice and weapons training. A photo essay in China's *People's Daily* newspaper showing teenagers engaged in extreme physical tasks was headlined, "Student's Toughened Up In Military Training" (2017 [online]). 'Zhou' (interview: 2015) told me that at nine and eleven years old, she and her classmates trained with new recruits (largely men aged eighteen) taken into the PLA university. They were awoken at 5:00 am, had cold showers and ran many miles every day. They ate simple rations, are were not allowed any contact with the outside world. 'Zhou' told me that her and her classmates were so hungry during this training that they began stealing handfuls of raw flour from the kitchen. They would mix this with water and eat this raw dough to curtail their hunger. In the blistering heat of the summer in Beijing, the students underwent discipline training where they stood completely still, gazing ahead, arms by their sides in full army fatigues with heavy backpacks for two or more hours ('standing to attention' [立正]). During this training, 'Zhou' began to feel nauseous from the heat and weight of her backpack. She raised her hand and told her Lieutenant she was feeling unwell. The Lieutenant's response was that she should remain standing immobile regardless. She proceeded to continue to stand motionless and vomited down her face and clothing. She stood, covered in her own vomit, until the end of the exercise. This very extreme example of discipline training enforced to create docility in the body seems harsh when practised on adults, but is something more like abuse when it occurs in children. The extreme nature of this disciplinary technique requires students to be highly self-controlled, to endure pain and deny normal bodily needs. The submission to authority and domination that the students experience is so severe that it suggests that this is not a by-product of the creation of a powerful, virtuosic docile body, but in fact the primary goal itself. While classical ballet is most certainly a highly demanding art form, one in which the cultivation of strong self-discipline is necessary, it seems that this extreme level of discipline, the ability to withstand near torturous exercises, might do more harm than good in the production of a virtuosic body.

There was one positive side effect of the very intensive training which students underwent in China. Almost all my interlocutors mentioned with great fondness the close bonds that developed during their years of living and training alongside their classmates. Without exception interviewees discussed their classmates using language which might normally be reserved for family. They discussed the pleasure of living side by side, of a closeness more commonly seen amongst siblings, of birthdays celebrated, of the petty squabbles shared, and of the friendships that remained many years after leaving school. When they socialised in groups, the students touched each other with fondness and familiarity. Girls walk the campus arm in arm or holding hands. It might be suggested that undergoing very challenging experiences at a formative age when students are removed from their family support networks caused students to develop deeper connections than normally seen amongst school friends. The uniqueness of their shared history, so unfamiliar to many family members and nondancing friends, meant students were able to earnestly understand each other's experiences and appreciate the value the field affords highly specific successes and failures, unknowable by those outside the profession.

The above recollections demonstrate that training to be a professional ballet dancer in China is physically, psychologically and emotionally intense. The daily existence for a young dancer is to be subjected to continuous monitoring, physical pain, hunger and exhaustion in order to cultivate a virtuosic body. These modes of self-examination, discipline and bodily control produce accomplished, highly skilled and beautiful bodies capable of fulfilling one's professional destiny. This destiny is a path, which in China, has been selected for dancers when they are small children. Considerably capital investment has been made on the part of the state and the individual, necessitating abandoning other areas of development meaning that other avenues are practically inaccessible for the student. This sense of having few other options obligates the student to continue on the road to this predetermined destiny and the cultivation of docility. Comparative studies of Chinese and Western classrooms note that the notion of success is reinterpreted in a collectivist framework which means that success on the part of the individual involves the family, peers, teachers, and even the society more generally (Holloway, 1988; Ho, 1993; Salili, 1996). When a child is selected by an institution such as a prestigious ballet school, the success of the child is subsumed into success for the entire network of family and in more rural settings, even entire villages and

local regions. This contributes to pressure and motivation on the individual to deny negative or unpleasant somatic experience and remained disciplined in the pursuit of virtuosity, the ultimate determinate of success.

As outlined in chapter two, ballet as it is institutionalised and practised in contemporary China, sits at the convergence of Western conceptions of and approaches to, the cultivation of the body which are fundamental to the artforms development, alongside ideas about the methods used to train of the body, and the capital/power which can be exercised when bodily virtuosity is achieved, which are unique to China.

The body as it is constructed in the body project in sociology, and as it is made manifest in the practice of classical ballet, is considered an individual, a site of representation and cultivation which distinguishes it from other bodies in the world. In classical Chinese philosophy the body is formed in a social world where the individual is connected to other bodies and the surrounding environments (through substances such as *qi* or *dao*). This idea of the individual in relation to others endures in modern China too. It is seen in the way a student's ability to attend a prestigious institution is to some extent reliant on the network of social relationships in terms of *guanxi*, in the intimacy of peer and teacher relationships build in the process of training, and in the shared group success which emerges as a result of an individual's achievement in the genre.

We can see that the structure of ballet training institutions also sits at an intersection of different cultural understandings. The establishment of institutionalised training during the Maoist era has characteristics of the political ideology of the time more generally. The physical training is militaristic, highly stratified and regulated. The conditions in which the students live resemble the sparse, collective proletarian environments of the Maoist era. However, the physical capital and the specific virtuosity being cultivated, as well the form it is generated to practice is Western and is underpinned by Western conceptions about beauty and art.

When the dancer performs 32 perfectly executed *fouette* turns, she is referencing a legacy of Western artistic and bodily practice, as well as the history of the body in classical Chinese

philosophy, and virtuous qualities of Maoist bodily virtuosity. She is at once a highly skilled individual, one which has had to practice meticulous self-control to be able to gain and assert her power and agency, and she is also a subject, a disciplined docile body. Moreover, in modern training there are hangovers of the Maoist understanding that the cultivation of physical virtuosity bring status to the state, as seen in desire to adopt classical ballet at all and in the high quality of state funded training. The notion that individual success becomes a metaphor for success in a broader arena pervades the cultivation of bodily virtuosity. This idea of the individual dancer as national symbol, whose particular triumph bring status to the nation, will be explored further in the next chapter which examines a case study in a specific form of training: the international ballet competition.

CHAPTER SEVEN: 7.1 Not Another Don Quixote! Negotiating China's Position on the International Ballet Stage

"Not another Don Quixote," a woman a couple of rows away muttered under her breath as the Minkus introduction to Kitri's famous third act fan variation began to play into the nearly empty auditorium[29]. It was the first native English I had heard in a while and, in addition to the language, I shared the sentiment. Three hours into the first round at the Beijing International Ballet and Choreography Competition (IBCC), I had already seen this exact variation six times. Each was danced with impeccable technical precision by a young ballet dancer in the main theatre of the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), near Tiananmen Square.

It was not that I dislike the work; from the entire classical repertoire, I had chosen this same variation to dance as a graduation performance upon completing ballet school a decade earlier. In this short yet challenging solo, Kitri displays virtuosic technique with a flirtatious wave of her fan and coquettish wink of the eye. However, removed from the wider context of the ballet, danced on a bare stage to a recording of the score, even the most polished Kitri would have struggled to excite the small, scattered audience of coaches and parents. She faces an even greater challenge when the audience has already seen this solo six times in a single afternoon.

What emerges in this chapter is an ethnographic exploration of international ballet competitions, specifically their multilayered significance for aspiring Chinese dancers and the broader institution of ballet in China. Taking the Third Beijing IBCC (2015) as a case study, I explore how international ballet competitions function independently, and on a transnational scale, as well as highlighting specific considerations arising from the IBCC's Chinese situation. I investigate the value found in engaging with ballet competitions in terms of Bourdieu's physical, social, economic, and political capital, and illustrate how

29 *Don Quixote* (1869) is a ballet choreographed by Marius Petipa to a score by Ludwig Minkus, based on episodes from *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605) by Miguel de Cervantes. Kitri, the ballet's heroine, is the beautiful and fiery daughter of an inn-keeper who defies her father's wishes to meet, and eventually marry, her beloved, the charismatic Basilio.

competitions contribute to ballet as a global practice. I foreground how this value operates differently for individual competitors, dance teachers, training institutions, and even nations, both inside China and in the rest of the world, to indicate the significance of competitions as a contributing factor to China's growing importance to ballet as a transnational practice. This chapter applies a conception identified in previous discussions, that the virtuosic body becomes a metaphor for the virtues of the state and demonstrates a way in which this idea endures in the modern era. The idea of the individual dancer as national symbol, whose particular triumph bring status to the nation is exemplified in international ballet competitions today. This chapter also attempts to step back from the specific focus on the form within China to illuminate the place of ballet in China for an international ballet community when it is viewed as part of a transnational practice.

During fieldwork conducted in Beijing during the summer of 2015, I attended every stage of the competition over a ten-day period, all rounds in both the ballet and choreography competition (where some dancers participating in the ballet competition also competed). During breaks over the course of the competition at the NCPA, I interviewed approximately twenty-five competitors from all over the world, and talked informally to many more, as well as their parents, teachers, coaches, and choreographers. This ethnography exposes the larger structures and functions of the ballet competition in relation to the transnational character of the field, as well as the individual experiences of competitors in order to account for the diversity and complexity of the competitive arena.

Firstly I describe the nature of international ballet competitions and their place in the broader ballet institution. From this, it emerges that many experts in the field are critical of competitions for reducing ballet as an artistic form to one better equated to sport, with a focus on technical virtuosity. Given this criticism, the chapter moves on to explore the value of partaking in competitions, such as the potential for increased social capital in a globalized field, and greater physical capital through improved skills and performance for the individual dancer. Following this, an investigation into competitions in an international arena illuminates the way in which the dancers become metaphors for the state imbued with political capital. Finally, the chapter returns to China to problematize the issues that arise

when the local ballet field is so heavily invested in competitive success at the expense of other areas of development.

Ballet, both in practice and institution, is structured by competition. The dancer must, at every moment, be competitive with herself: fighting gravity, time, space, physical limitations, and the will and desires of her body, individuals are engaged in a never-ending competition. In training classrooms, dancers are competitive with one another, knowing that their relative success will be important to their future progression. Beyond training, ballet companies have hierarchical structures; the allocation of roles, awarding of opportunities, and mechanisms for promotion are, to some extent, built upon competition. Perhaps the most explicit example of these competitive structures are ballet competitions themselves.

The Beijing IBCC is the most recent addition to a group of International Ballet Competitions (IBC) held in rotation in several cities around the world. The Varna International Ballet Competition, founded in 1964 in Bulgaria, if not the first ballet competition (the Adeline Genée Competition has been running since 1931), was the first truly international professional competition of its kind and, since its inception, many more have emerged in this network. Moscow (founded in 1969), Tokyo (1976, later moved to Osaka), Jackson, Mississippi (1979), New York (1983), Helsinki (1984), Paris (1984), Shanghai (1995), Seoul (2005), and Cape Town (2008) have all held international Olympic-like ballet competitions for students and professional dancers. Of these, perhaps Varna, Moscow, and Jackson are the most prestigious and well attended for professional dancers. Additionally, stand-alone competitions such as the Prix de Lausanne (1973), Switzerland and Youth American Grand Prix (YAGP), USA (1999), are held annually for talented students.

Sports-like competition and awarding dancers numerical value for their performances does not sit comfortably in an art form whose expressive and interpretive qualities are not easily quantifiable. Nevertheless, ballet competitions are an important part of the career and development of a great many dancers, and that of many great dancers. Indeed, few principal dancers in top-tier ballet companies do not have a slew of competition prizes to their name. Awarding medals, cash prizes, and company contracts, these competitions have

become integral to the workings of ballet as a transnational practice. They thrive as a spectacular yet efficient showcase for identifying emerging talents, and are scrutinized and celebrated by an international dance community. Events are televised and broadcast over the Internet, and winners emerge as minor celebrities (albeit field-specific ones). Winners become commercially viable for ballet companies, dancewear manufactures, and magazines, and are sought-after performers for galas or as guest artists on the freelance circuit.

In her ethnography of Chinese classical dancers in China, anthropologist Emily Wilcox (2011: 6) notes that dancers who were successful in competition "became celebrities of the dance world, and at times they even crossed over into mainstream celebrity status. They appear frequently performing their famous competition works on television and in major national media events including the annual CCTV (Chinese state television network) New Year gala and other performances with wide popular viewing audiences." This holds true for ballet dancers, too, and was reiterated in the gala for the opening of the Beijing competition, where several of the specially invited performers were "famous" winners of previous competitions. One such performer was the seventeen-year-old star of the documentary *First Position* (2011, dir. Bess Kargman), Miko Fogarty. Fogarty has won medals in the Moscow IBC, at the Varna IBC, the Prix de Lausanne, and the Youth American Grand Prix, and her success confers fame in the dance world. With over 15.5 million views of her YouTube channel (as of January 2017), Fogarty was also listed as one of "The Most Influential People of 2011" by *Dance Spirit Magazine*, when she was just fourteen years old. It was clear by the uproarious reaction of the Beijing audience when Fogarty entered the stage that she was a celebrity in the dance world, even before she had performed with a professional ballet company[30].

7.2"If I See Another Corsaire or Another Don Quixote!": Criticisms of Ballet Competitions

Many criticisms are levied at international ballet competition, and perhaps the most pressing of these concerns their prioritization of bravura technical feats at the expense of

30 At the time of this competition, Fogarty had yet to make a professional debut. After a brief contract with Birmingham Royal Ballet, Fogarty is no longer performing full time and is attending college at University of California, Berkeley.

artistry[31] .The critics claim that ballet in these competitions is more like gymnastic displays, a sport rather than an art form. In one of the few scholarly contributions to the field, former Royal Ballet dancer and scholar Geraldine Morris (2008) asks if the ballet competition is antithetical to dance as art. She explores the way in which ballet competitions are judged and, following philosophers David Best (1978, 1985, 2004) and Graham McFee (1992, 2004, 2005), highlights the problems that arise in evaluating ballet using aesthetic rather than artistic judgments. In so doing, Morris echoes a fear commonly expressed by critics, teachers, and company directors: ballet competitions and their emphasis on virtuosic technique are damaging to the future of ballet as an artistic practice.

Morris (2008) highlights two ways in which ballet competitions overemphasize impressive technical feats at the expense of other elements of artistry, and as such fail to accurately represent the totality of ballet as an art form. She suggests that the nineteenth-century competition repertoire selected for participants to dance presents limitations when treated as a criterion for excellence. Morris (2008: 40) argues that "the perception of these dances as an amalgam of classroom steps can encourage display and technical bravura rather than artistic interpretation." Despite this, it is clear to see why these cornerstones of the classical ballet canon are standard competition fare.

Making the selection of competition repertoire broader might go some way to addressing the concerns over the lack of artistry. Including twentieth- and twenty-first-century choreographers whose work diverges more boldly from a series of classroom steps might allow for greater display of artistic interpretation. However, the conservative selection of competition repertoire might suggest an attempt on behalf of the event organizers to avoid favouring one training school, style, or nationality over another. The canonical nineteenth-century repertoire is performed all over the world. Few elite ballet schools and companies do not perform *Sleeping Beauty* (1890) or *Swan Lake* (1895). Of course, these ballets

31 I appreciate that "artistry" presents an unwieldy term, although professionals in the field agree that ballet demands an artistic component further to simply demonstrating movement according to the rules dictated by the classical technique. There is an emphasis on how these movements are performed, and this is affected by many factors, such as particular choreographic style or idiom, a narrative or theme, interaction with the musical accompaniment or lack thereof, appropriate and specific choice to vary dynamics. A fuller articulation of the term artistry in classical ballet is beyond the scope of this discussion (see Glasstone 2000; McFee 1992, 2005; Morris 2008).

demonstrate their own specific historical, stylistic context and ethnicity, but their omnipresence and familiarity among competitors renders them almost "style-free". Choosing a piece of twentieth- or twenty-first-century repertoire (by choreographers such as George Balanchine, Sir Fredrick Ashton, John Cranko, or Hans Van Manen, for example) might privilege some competitors (those more familiar with a certain choreographic or national style) over others. Furthermore, it creates complications in judging. Judges would need to be expert in all styles to assess the artistic and stylistic merit of each performance. Moreover, how does one demonstrate parity when evaluating work from distinct choreographers, each with a unique movement vocabulary? Competitions with an aesthetic element in fields that lack canonical repertoire, such as gymnastics and figure skating (Arkaev and Georgievich 2004; Xu and Zhao 2007), deal with this by awarding a score based on technical difficulty and another based on execution. However, rating choreography with such diverse movement possibilities for technical difficulties seems fraught with problems, and perhaps does little to level the playing field.

The now defunct New York IBC (NYIBC closed in 2013) dealt with this conflict well. Teaching three pieces of distinct choreography to all the competitors serves two functions. First, few competitors will have experience of the diverse repertoire; therefore learning and performing a variety of choreography in a short time frame more accurately reflects life in a professional company, moving between different styles multiple times in a day or week. Second, when all competitors dance the same vocabulary, it allows judges to more easily compare and reward interpretation, musicality, and style. This sentiment is reiterated by the director of the NYIBC, Ilona Copen: "Each couple, although they are learning the same rep, each couple brings to it, their heritage, their background, their schooling, their culture, and although you see the same piece performed they all look quite different And, of course, they all bring their own personality to it" (*Beyond the Gold*, Inside New York Ballet Competition documentary).

Morris (2008: 45) also suggests that, in an attempt to present the most bravura technique, the dance lacks shading and variation: "The dance movement, as danced by the candidates, lacks subtle nuances, there is no attempt to play with the music, every arabesque is somewhere in the region of 180 degrees, and every jump is big. As a result, the

performances appear remarkably similar to each other." This was a feature of the IBCC 2015, too, although not entirely surprising.

A dancer has only two or three short variations to impress the judges. Given the brevity of each performance, it is difficult for a dancer to make subtle choices. Impressive technical standards can be objectively assessed quickly during the duration of a short solo: body proportions, natural facility for ballet, and technical feats are observable and measurable. Artistic interpretation, however, is incredibly subjective. It is difficult to quantify, particularly under time pressure. How does one measure which Kitri best flirts with her fan or which Giselle most radiates the fit-to-burst excitement of first-time love? This raises the question of whether the bias toward observable technique in competition judging creates a flattening of individual subjective opinion toward what is concretely measurable when there are multiple judges, each holding an individual, subjective view of artistry. Moreover, when viewed empirically, the more anomalous scores, which are likely to occur with the subjective nature of the value placed on artistry, are insignificant outliers when multiple scores deviate toward a mean. Artistic director of the Seoul IBC and judge at the IBCC 2015, Hae Shik Kim, confirms that the tabulation centre typically omits the highest and lowest scores for the final points (Kim in Wozny 2015: 35).

The importance of bravura technique was also understood by some of the competitors, who used this perception to make conscious decisions about their performances. 'Robin', a professional dancer in a well-known company in the United States, stated "that [in a competition environment] it is easy to view ballet as, like a sport, because it's so a) physically demanding, and b) we're judged on a physical criteria, for the most part." ('Robin', Interview: 2015).

Hungarian teacher Maria Fay (1997) suggests that impressive technical ability is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a successful career as a professional ballet dancer. Fay (1997) argues that there is now such an emphasis on technique that for some it becomes a sufficient condition. In this view, competitions, and the media they produce with their worldwide audience, with their bias toward virtuosic technical ability, might be partially responsible for feeding this change. In his ethnography of the Royal Ballet, London,

sociologist Steven Wainwright (2004, 101) asked company ballet master Dexter about the bias toward gymnastic technique in international competitions and its place in a ballet company:

> DEXTER—Competitions, you know; they're now so incredibly big. If I see another Corsaire or another Don Quixote! You see I don't really like all that because it doesn't teach them to be artists, it only teaches them to do tricks. You've got to iron all that out of them, well not iron it all out, but you've got to start to make them think differently.

Company dancers are artists and athletes combined. The dancer must develop his or her artistry, musicality, and interpretation alongside his or her athletic technical ability in order to flourish as an artist in a ballet company. The focus on technical virtuosity in most ballet competitions does not necessarily contribute heavily to the development of the skills required for ballet dancers to be well-rounded artists and performers. Thus, it could be argued that while great artists can emerge from competitions, the practice itself is unlikely to produce them.

7.3 "Bridge of Aspiration": Why Take Part?

Given the criticisms levied against ballet competitions from some in the ballet establishment, why take part in a competition at all? One of the greatest incentives to partake in an international competition occurs when the student undertakes her final year or two of training. As the student progresses toward full-time professional employment in ballet, the social capital of her training institution becomes increasingly important. Whereas, in the early years of ballet training, quality tuition is paramount to build a solid foundation of technical skills, as the dancer approaches her final years of schooling and faces the reality of auditioning for a professional company contract, the worldwide status and recognition of the school itself becomes more important. Much as attending Ivy League universities in the United States or Oxford or Cambridge University in the United Kingdom indicates a certain exceptional attainment on behalf of the student, particular ballet schools worldwide hold similar symbolic status within the field.

Furthermore, just as elite universities offer an extensive "old boy" network on graduation, which includes opportunities to gain work experience with influential employers, so do the top dance schools. For example, talented final-year students attending the British Royal Ballet Upper School are sometimes given the chance to perform as part of the corps de ballet with the Royal Ballet. They literally and metaphorically cross the "Bridge of Aspiration," which physically links the school to the company's base at the Royal Opera House in London. The experience of taking class, rehearsing, and performing with the company affords the student the opportunity to gain vocational skills and social capital, giving her an edge over similarly well-trained dancers also looking for a professional contract.

The prizes awarded at most international ballet competitions come in the form of full scholarships to top international training schools or apprenticeships with prestigious professional companies. While many of the winners of ballet competitions in Europe already train at these prestigious schools, many of the competitors from Asia and South America attend schools with less worldwide status and social capital. They are also geographically removed from the metropolitan centres[32] of the ballet world. Furthermore, the fees for these schools are often prohibitive for many of the individual competitors. Therefore, succeeding in a competition could provide the student with an opportunity to train, in his or her critical final years, in one of the most prestigious and well-connected institutions in the world. Better still, an apprenticeship with one of these professional companies is a year-long opportunity to work with a company, increasing the student's chance at a permanent contract.

As a result of their potential to springboard a professional career, international competitions attract some of the most talented students from around the world. The standard of ballet shown is exceptionally high and, in order to stand a chance of success, dancers begin competition-specific training as far as one year in advance of the competition.

32 Ballet is a transnational practice and can be found on a greater or lesser scale in almost every corner of the world. In global terms, the metropolitan centres of the ballet world could be considered to be large cities in western Europe and the United States, most notably, London, Paris, and New York, as well as historic centres of excellence in Russia, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Most competitions require the students to learn one or two classical variations from a pre-approved list of nineteenth-century classics (even if the contemporary performance and aesthetics of these solos have radically changed since the nineteenth century). In addition to the dancers' normal training, these variations are intensively rehearsed and polished.

Several of the dancers I interviewed noted that they had been invited by a teacher, coach, or peer to enter the competition. Many Chinese participants told me with some pride that they had been selected by their teachers to enter. These tended to be top students in the advanced levels at prestigious state-funded ballet schools. For these students, being selected to compete in a competition conferred a special status among their peers. Only the most talented, hardworking students were selected to compete. They noted that entering competitions was an important stage in many of their favourite dancers' careers, and suggested that a competition was a good opportunity to work intensively on their technique with their teachers and coaches. These competitors understood the recognition that can come with being successful in a prestigious competition.

7.4 "What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger": Recognising Progression in the Competition Format

In interviews conducted during the IBCC, competitors primarily spoke about using the competition as an arena to develop their dancing. An international competition requires months of preparation outside a dancer's normal training, rehearsing, and performing schedule. To participate in the IBCC, dancers competing as individuals had to learn and rehearse between four and six variations. Competing in the semifinals, dancers were required to perform two variations from the competition's selected repertoire and a contemporary variation of their own choosing. Progressing to the final, dancers presented two further classical solos, one of which could be repeated from the previous round, and a contemporary variation, which could also be repeated. Learning and perfecting these variations are time-consuming, in addition to the already intensive schedule of a dancer. Many prominent teachers suggest that the pressure of performing in an elite competition forces the dancer to progress at an accelerated rate. Dominic Antonucci (2015: 33), ballet master and former principal dancer with Birmingham Royal Ballet, writes of the increased focus and commitment that preparations for competitions require and suggests that his

own experience of competing in the USAIBC at Jackson were “a test of nerve, but also of consistency and mental fortitude. The saying goes, ‘What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.’ This rings very true in regard to competitions. Self-belief is vital to any dancer’s success, and competing is a very practical way of building this.”

During my fieldwork in China I spent many weeks observing the final-year boys’ ballet classes at the prestigious Shanghai Dance School. Two boys in the class had been selected to take part in the Shanghai IBC later in the year. Day after day, the two boys rehearsed their solos after class, with their teacher correcting the tiniest of details. The Dragon Boat festival (*Duanwu jie* [端午节]) fell during this period, and the school was officially closed for the day to allow celebrations. The day before the festival, I was surprised to receive a message from the class teacher informing that there would be an extra class during the holiday. When I arrived at the school, the building was largely empty, except for the teacher and the two competition students, taking class without any accompaniment. The class lasted about two and half hours, an hour longer than the standard boys’ class, with additional time afterward for each boy to practice his solos for the competition. The teacher focused on miniscule details of each boy’s performance, commenting on the tension in individual fingers and unnecessary lifts of the chin. The boys and their teacher dripped with sweat when they eventually finished rehearsing, over four hours later. With such focused and individual additional training, it is clear to see why competitions are seen as a good method of accelerating normal progress.

The rhetoric of competition as a form of professional development and increased physical capital was reiterated by a female IBCC competitor currently performing in Romania. After several years dancing in the corps de ballet, she wanted to be challenged. Training often provides students with the opportunity to learn technically difficult repertoire danced primarily by principal dancers, and many hours are spent refining complex classroom steps. A dancer in her first few years performing with a professional company will not often be granted the opportunity to perform these roles. While performing corps de ballet roles presents its own unique demands, the dancer I interviewed wanted to try her hand at repertoire that offered more technical challenges:

> I don't know if fear is the right word, but I doubted whether I could do two variations, after a few years of being in a corps de ballet, you don't do that kind of stuff [virtuosic soloist repertoire], and so it hadn't really been since school that I had done that. . . . I do eventually want to get out of the corps, like most people, I'd like to do more, so this [the competition] is like a test, like a moment of growth ('Annie', Interview: 2015).

The competition as a learning opportunity or chance to grow, removed from the expectations and hierarchical structures of their daily training, was a common theme expressed by the competitors. Notably, differences in the format of international competitions better suit this kind of motivation.

The format of the NYIBC indicated the development of the individual dancer as the primary concern, and thus rewarded technical and artistic progression during the competition period. Competitors in the first round were not required to pre-learn variations; instead, in an intensive, fully funded three-week workshop, they were taught three pieces of competition repertoire by an expert coach. The repertoire selected in this competition was, in general, outside the typical competition fare of nineteenth-century classical variations. For example, in 2003, competitors were asked to learn repertoire as diverse as a pas de deux from Marius Petipa's *La Bayadère* (1877), August Bourneville's *Kemiesse in Bruges* (1851), and José Limón's *Mazurkas* (1958 [1985]). Often the subtle choreographic styles and idiomatic selections were beyond many of the competitors' current repertoire. The "foreign" repertoire and the intensive coaching experience leading up to the competition performances provided participants with a unique development experience. Furthermore, it ensured that there was an enriching learning opportunity for all participants at the competition. It placed greater emphasis on the preparation than the performance; thus even competitors who were eliminated after the first round had a valuable experience. It also better reflected the reality of working as a professional dancer, moving between different works, rather than expertly perfecting a few short variations for competition. Similarly, the annual Prix de Lausanne also presents competitors with a greater opportunity to approach the competition as a learning opportunity. The competitors come prepared with variations from pre-selected competition repertoire, learned from an official Prix

recording[33]. The dancers are coached on these variations by teachers and choreographers during the course of the competition, some of which is observed by the judges. The competitors are also judged while taking ballet and contemporary classes; thus they are evaluated on a broader range of skills than the singular focus of the on-stage variation performances at the IBCC. The narrow focus of the IBCC format was highlighted by a competitor who was eliminated after the first round in Beijing:

> I don't feel like I have much experience [in the competition]. The first two days there were no classes, and everyone was doing their own thing in the studio, so there wasn't much space to run anything . . . you then get ten minutes on the stage to have a rehearsal. As a professional, it's really hard to put your head on the chopping block and it's a hard pill to swallow if you're cut early on. I didn't feel great about my performance and I only got to do it once on stage ('Annie', Interview: 2015).

As in the case of this competitor, the primary motivation for many dancers was that it offered an opportunity to challenge themselves and develop as technicians and artists. This discourse prioritizes "competing with oneself," which might be a healthy way to approach competition. Setting personal goals and devising strategies to reach those goals negate the idea of failure to win an award. Emphasis is placed on the process of learning, rather than on winning. However, this cannot be considered competing in its sense of out-performing others striving for the same reward. Philosopher John Loy (1968, 4–5) defines competition as "a struggle for supremacy between two or more opposing sides," and makes clear that competition requires actors who are consciously aiming for supremacy over other competitor(s). Education scholars John Martin Rich and Joseph DeVitis (1992) suggest that

> the idea of competing with oneself is misleading since someone can seek to perform well by attempting to attain a standard independently of others, whether self-created or created by an external authority. This is a variation once again of the misnomer "competing with oneself," as the individual is seeking privately to attain something or to improve oneself. Two or more persons are not striving for R[eward] (in Gallops, 2005: 19).

33 There are many potential issues with learning dance from video recordings, but perhaps most relevant to ballet competition is that removing solos from the wider context of the ballet, and having them performed by one dancer on video, encourages imitation rather than substantial and appropriate personal artistic interpretation. What might be individual interpretation or an idiosyncratic style becomes fixed choreographic "fact" on film, to be reproduced in performance by young dancers.

In this view, the performer who is pitted against herself is no longer competing in the traditional sense of the word. Ballet is a genre in which dancers are perpetually competing with themselves, striving for excellence; a higher arabesque, greater turnout, or a more fluid ports de bras. A dancer does not need the format of a competition to engage in self-improvement.

Furthermore, the idea of competing against oneself, striving for betterment, is negated when considering how participants select their competition repertoire. If participants understood the competition as primarily a chance to focus and work on weak areas consistently, and improve technique and artistry more generally, then it would be logical to attend a competition with a stronger focus on progression and development, and to select repertoire based on areas of weakness. However, more often variations are chosen based on their ability to showcase each individual's technical strengths. To this end, variations are frequently altered (a common strategy in classical ballet) to a greater or lesser extent to highlight particular areas of virtuosity or avoid areas of perceived weakness. Such modifications are implemented to ensure physical capital (for instance, showing the aesthetic of the body to its maximum potential through high-cut leotards to make legs seem longer) and to demonstrate technical virtuosity (for example, through pirouettes turned exclusively in one direction or bravura elements substituted for others). These strategies seem to run in opposition to the commonly suggested idea that participants were competing with themselves or using the competition as an opportunity for technical improvement.

While there is status attached to winning an international ballet competition for all participants, there is a uniquely Chinese motivation to take part in competitions for Chinese competitors. China operates a scheme of organization wherein there is a national ranking system in which artists can apply for status and privileges based on their education and professional accomplishments. Performers for high-status state-funded institutions (those considered "in the system," as opposed to privately funded institutions, "outside the system") are awarded the highest status. The NCPA, which is an important funder and the host of the IBCC in Beijing, is one such high-status institution, and confers this status upon

the competition. To obtain Class A, the highest status, dancers must win many top-level awards in competitions, have extensive experience in a high-status institution, and be considered at the top of the field. Accompanying the Beijing competition was a high-profile three-day gala, beginning after the competition award ceremony, with performances from famous principal dancers from all over the world. The program for this gala listed short biographies of all performers. The entry for each performer included a long list of the prizes and awards secured at top international ballet competitions. The biography for Wan Zihan, a Chinese classical dancer, even noted Zihan's status as a National Class-A Artist (gala program, NCPA, July 2015). Artists with this rank carry brand recognition and value, which in turn means they are able to demand high fees for guest appearances. For the Chinese competitors, the IBCC not only offers a chance to gain status and propel a career internationally (as the biographies of competition-winning star dancers demonstrate), it also presents an important means of gaining national recognition.

7.5"Nation Dancing against Nation": Positioning Chinese Ballet in a Globalized Field

So far, we have seen that there are important motivators for individual dancers in China and elsewhere to compete in competitions. However, there are motivations to compete that extend beyond the individual dancer. In China, a country which has had institutionalized ballet for fewer than sixty years, holding a prestigious international competition demonstrates to the world that, aside from the growing success of individual Chinese dancers in international competitions, China itself is a major player in the field of ballet. Much like hosting an Olympic Games, a large-scale international competition of this type stands as a symbol of China's strength, cultural sensitivity, and commitment to ballet as an art form. It is a local forum in which to showcase the wealth and quality of Chinese training and talent.

In an article in the British Observer newspaper, ballerina Maude Lloyd and her husband Nigel Gosling (writing under the joint name of Alexander Bland) described international ballet competitions as "[n]ation dancing against nation" (Bland 1969). To return to the discussion in chapter two, we can see that Alter's 'somatic nationalism' (1994) is useful in reiterating this competitive discourse. Alter noted how the body of the individual athlete (or dancer) is made into a symbol that represents his or her country, and this is never more

evident that in international competitions. The athlete or dancer's individual strength, energy, self-discipline, vitality, and other virtuous qualities become political metaphors for the state.

As previously noted, Alter suggests that highly trained bodies are somewhat liberated from the burdens that ties the everyday workers to the economic infrastructure: the shackles of productivity. The virtuosic body, therefore, becomes a symbol of power. When an individual seems to embody mythical ideals, such as Herculean strength or knightly courage, rather than mundane labour power, then his or her strength, energy, vitality, and endurance become political metaphors rather than individual measures of value.

The idea of the dancer as national symbol arose in discussion with my interlocutors in the Beijing competition. A young American student who had spent many years training in the Russian class at the Bolshoi School spoke about asking the permission of the school to compete in the Prix de Lausanne. Initially reluctant, eventually his Russian teachers relented, saying, "you might be an American competing, but remember, you're our [emphasis original] American." ('Justin', Interview: 2015). In this case, the dancer has two symbolic national identities: that of the American, and that of the honorary Russian (as demonstrated in both the words of his teacher, and bodily through the dancer's Russian-style technique or habitus). This reveals a complex negotiation between the achievement of the individual from a national perspective, and the achievement of a nation from a transnational perspective. 'Justin' clearly felt this negotiation as he described his dual identities as national symbols during the Prix de Lausanne:

> Coming from the Bolshoi Ballet School, I am in a unique position to represent both the USA and Russia, especially important at this time of tension between our countries. During the competition I wore my Russian Olympics jacket, as I am proud to represent both Russia and the USA ('Justin' in Spicer, 2017 [online]).

To return specifically to China, and to our analysis of the body, the Maoist body proposed by anthropologist Susan Brownell (1995), is once again relevant. Brownell notes that Maoist thinking on the approach to the cultivation of bodily virtuosity leaves a lasting legacy.

Brownell's concept identified in chapter two, of the "Maoist body" as a way of illuminating the link between Mao's communist state and the body of an individual can be useful here. She describes how Maoist ideology was written on the bodies of individual people, and the physical strength and fitness of discrete Chinese citizens became a problem of national significance. As we have seen, cultivation of the body under Mao suggested physical and mental strength, and an ability to transcend the everyday bodily desires of the undisciplined and to endure sacrifice and hardship to demonstrate a heartfelt commitment to the revolutionary cause. This discourse of sacrificing one's life for the revolutionary cause, to realize communist ideals, has consequences for the power and subjectivity of the individual. It is underpinned by the idea that an individual revolutionary subject does not own his or her body (Zhang, 2005: 6).

It is possible therefore to conceptualize the success of individual dancers in international ballet competitions as an outward-facing symbol of China's strength, power, cultural sensitivity, and indicator of the nation's growing importance as a centre for balletic excellence.

In quote above, 'Justin' feels deeply the symbolic potential of his body to reflect the ideology of, and bring status to, both his nations. He is aware of the complexity of the political environment and tensions between Russia and the United States and recognises that the status afforded him if he were successful in the competition has potential to, in a small way, minimise these tensions.

At the IBCC, the high level of the Chinese dancers was noted by the head of the classical ballet jury, Manuel Legris. The former étoile at the Paris Opera and director of the Wiener Staatsballet suggested in his speech during the grand Opening Ceremony that "a ballet competition is an important and difficult stage for a dancer, and can change their destiny. . . . And it [the competition] taking place in Beijing is even more difficult. The place of Chinese ballet is a really high and professional world standard" (IBCC Opening Ceremony, NCPA, Beijing, July 9, 2015). This proved to be true when fourteen of the nineteen awards granted in IBCC 2015 went to Chinese dancers. The very high standard of Chinese training that produces large numbers of elite Chinese dancers is also seen in the success of Chinese

dancers in many other competitions around the world. To select an example from another international competition, in the USAIBC 2014 and 2013, held in Jackson, Mississippi, Chinese dancers won two of eighteen, and seven of twenty-three prizes awarded, respectively (USAIBC website, 2015)[34]. In 2016, two of nine prizes at the Prix De Lausanne were awarded to Chinese students.

In addition to the status a dancer brings to the nation when he or she competes, success in ballet competitions also serves to help individual institutions in China. The most prestigious ballet schools in China are state-funded institutions. Students, if they pay at all, are expected to contribute only very modest fees. During an interview with a senior boys' teacher at one such university, the Shanghai Theatre Academy, 'Wang' revealed how student success in prestigious competitions served as measurable proof to the Chinese government that the school was achieving comparably with other international institutions. He suggested that the success of future funding for the school was contingent on measurable markers of success such as these (Teacher 'Wang', Interview: 2016).

Once the heads of the institution set a budget for the near future, they are asked to justify this budget based on previous achievement. Success at international competitions (even if it means the best Chinese students winning prizes to train elsewhere) is seen as a good way of evidencing that.

> The school makes a budget for the next year, they ask the government for money. The government will ask, what did you do this year, or the past two or three years. If you have the prize, yes, we have students who won Prix de Lausanne or the Youth American Grand Prix or other competitions, then the government will say, "yeah, okay, you did things, you have results, we give you the money." In China, they don't have a longer term plan, it's not like [a plan] for decades or two decades, no, three years or five, we give you the money, we have to see some results. Or even, I give you the money this year, you have to show me something next year. What's the most quick way to show them [governmental funding

34 There are many complications in quantifying the success of dancers from any one nation. The number of entrants from each country and the types of prizes awarded must be taken into consideration. Moreover, the way individual competitors are identified (by birthplace, country of residence, or country of training) presents further complications. However problematic, it is difficult to deny the success of Chinese dancers in international ballet competitions in recent years, and these statistics serve as a clear illustration of that.

> organizations] the things? The competitions. (Teacher 'Wang', Interview: 2016).

This indicates how central international competitions are as a way of measuring Chinese success against their international peers. Competitions function to concretely prove, even to a limited extent, that there is value in the economic support offered to ballet in China. Unlike more empirical endeavours, the value gained from governmental economic support cannot be easily appraised or quantified. The "slow burn" nature of ballet training means that investment does not produce a marketable product for as many as fifteen years, one that will never generate substantial economic capital. Moreover, the unwieldy nature of the art produced in performance means that achievement is highly subjective, whereas continued success in competitions provides immediate validation. This places a large responsibility on the dancer herself. Although she may not be aware of the responsibility resting on her shoulders, to an extent, she holds in her hands the future of ballet in China. While this recognition of international excellence serves a function within China to secure the economic stability of future state funding, it is largely symbolic to the wider global ballet community. With the exception of the competitions held in China, ballet competitions offer scholarships to prestigious schools and apprenticeships with renowned companies as prizes to the winners. However, regardless of the growing reputation of Chinese training, institutions in China very seldom have international students. It is common at schools such as the Royal Ballet School to have upward of 50% international students (Royal Ballet School Annual Report 2014–2015). When I visited the top training institute in China, the Beijing Dance Academy, I was told there were few international students among the vast student body; the teacher estimated fewer than 5%, with the majority of those students being from Hong Kong or Taiwan. Thus the success of Chinese ballet schools stands only to grow a reputation largely about their ability to train exclusively Chinese students because they lack the social capital of longer established schools better located in world centres for ballet. There are also incentives on the level of the individual teachers at Chinese academies to focus on training students for competitions. In an interview with a well-known Chinese teacher, Professor 'Ming', I was told that much as professional dancers must demonstrate career success to be considered for progression in the national ranking scheme, teachers also must be able to illustrate achievements in their field to be eligible for promotion. Having your student win a national or, better still, international competition highlights your

skill as a teacher. Professor Ming also noted that there are, in some cases, cash payments or other rewards for particularly successful teachers.

7.6 Looking Inward: The Role of the Competition within China

As established, there are many incentives to strive for success in ballet competition in China. To some extent, this motivation to succeed is what powers the field. There is motivation to compete on the part of the individual dancer who is looking to springboard an international career; motivation on the part of the teacher who receives status, rewards, and future opportunity for training successful students; institutional motivation to receive future funding; and national motivation to highlight China's power and cultural sensitivity in the global arena. However, it proves problematic to have a field that is so tightly focused on only one arena of the broader practice of the art.

The tenacious drive toward competitions as one of the end goals in ballet training in China necessitates a commitment on the part of the teacher to focus nearly exclusively on the very best students. During my observations at the Beijing Dance Academy, the Shanghai Dance School, and Shanghai Theatre Academy, I was struck by how much of the teacher's attention and vocal feedback was dedicated to one or two students in each class. The most talented students in a class received many times more physical corrections and vocal feedback than did their peers. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that the best student in the class may receive approximately six or seven times the number of corrections than any other member of the group might receive[35]. Moreover, when observing the end-of-term formal examinations, I noted that the students were arranged in space roughly according to their ability. All students were given a number, which correlated to the number of strokes in the characters in the student's name—essentially a random ordering[36]. Yet they did not stand in this number order. At the barre, the most able students stood at the

35 While undertaking fieldwork at the Shanghai Dance School watching ballet class with the third-year girls (approximately twelve and thirteen years old), I attempted to quantify what I had perceived in my observations watching this group and their teacher over the course of many weeks. In this one class alone (and one should be cautious of generalizing this specific observation more broadly) the ratio was roughly 6:1; six comments directed toward the best student and one to another member of the same group. Of course, there are also general comments directed to the whole group, and it is good practice as a dancer to apply all corrections to your work, regardless of the specific student at which they were targeted.

36 This is similar to ordering the students alphabetically in a language, such as English, that uses phonemic orthography. Another random method of ordering students commonly used is to arrange them by height.

centre of the barre in the middle of the room. The second and third students in the hierarchy stood to either side of the best student, and this was repeated around the room, with those students deemed less able at the end of the barre, furthest from the centre of the room. Away from the barre during centre practice, the most able student stood in the centre of the first row (downstage, closest to the judging panel of school faculty and invited guests), with the next most able dancer to either side in the first row, progressing down the room with many rows of students ordered in terms of their technical ability. The hierarchical arrangement of students indicates how the organization of space in training focuses toward measurable markers of outward success. Thus, space is structured by competition. Those students in each class who secure the focus of the teacher's attention will undoubtedly be the ones who are trained for international ballet competitions. This is a somewhat circular process whereby once those students are registered for an important competition, the competition necessitates, and to an extent justifies, the individual student's disproportionate attention. The attention on a few at the expense of many students was felt by a great number of the young dancers I interviewed in China:

> I don't think that my teacher thinks I can be a dancer at all. She never looks at me or my classmates for many years. She only looks at the best one. The one thing that keeps me going is my passion inside. It's hard because my classmate is like my sister. We lived in a dormitory together for seven years, she is like my sister, but still I feel like I want to be like her. I want the teacher to look at me too ('Shi Yi', Interview: 2014).

Whether or not this creates unhealthy, competitive intra-relationships between friends and classmates is perhaps outside the scope the discussion here; however, it does have ramifications for the development of ballet in China.

The training of one or two students per year at the expense of the other students in a cohort presents issues when those students are eventually successful in winning a scholarship or apprenticeship in an international competition. This is an outward-facing approach that aims to enhance China's status in a globalized ballet field. From the outside, the capital of the successful individual becomes equated with that of the state, and conclusions that reflect on the status of China are drawn. Yet successful dancers will ultimately leave China to dance abroad in companies with greater status, social capital, and

opportunity. Those who remain have less physical capital and were effectively trained to lower standards than their classmates who were deemed to possess greater potential. This means that those who did not make the grade in international competitions populate China's national and regional companies. Thus, Chinese ballet companies are destined to be second tier in a globalized market. The ballet stars of the future that China produces populate the top tier companies internationally and thus bring symbolic status to China, but it does little to boost the actual standing of ballet as an institution within the country itself. In this way, ballet as an institution in China is self-limiting.

In recent years this has begun to change. Competitions held within China are making significant efforts to attract international competitors. Winning the "Grand Prix" title at the Beijing competition commands a prize of $20,000. While the Grand Prix prize was not awarded in 2015, the Senior category (ages 19–26) gold medal winners each took home $10,000. Silver medallists won $7,000, and recipients of bronze medals, $4,000. There are slightly smaller prize funds in the Junior category (ages 16–18, gold, silver, and bronze receiving $7,000, $5,000, and $3,000, respectively), and a number of other miscellaneous prizes such as the "NCPA Special Award" ($2,000) and the "Jury Special Award" ($2,000) (IBCC 2015 Rules and Regulations Booklet). While individual Chinese dancers certainly use international competitions to showcase their talents to a worldwide audience with hopes of a career outside China, this is not encouraged by the Chinese ballet institution. Thus, despite the world-renowned international judging panel, there are no international scholarships or company contracts officially awarded at IBCC. Therefore, to attract high-caliber international competitors to a Chinese competition with a largely domestic audience (and little chance of a company contract), a high prize fund is necessary. The lack of social capital found in Chinese institutions needs to be mitigated with higher economic capital. The prize fund at the IBCC is substantially higher than all other International Ballet Competitions held worldwide.

While several international competitions provide accommodation, transfers, and a per diem, Beijing is the only international competition that also provides a generous

contribution towards travel too. The competition pays up to 5,000 RMB[37] for international travel. Therefore the competition is essentially open to all, regardless of a competitor's financial situation. It is somewhat ironic that a competition rewards individual success so highly with a substantial prize fund, but employs meritocratic, socialist ideals. It seems that a nascent competition in a country with a relatively short history of institutionalized ballet requires these perks to draw international competitors.

Another indicator of China opening its arms to the global ballet community emerged when Shanghai Dance School became a Prix de Lausanne partner institution. This scholarship allows one winner of the Prix to study at the Shanghai Dance School. There is yet to be a Prix winner to accept a scholarship in China; however, with large numbers of Chinese winners in international competitions, the strong reputation for excellent training, and growing opportunities in China, it is clear that this will not be too far in the future. Partnering with institutions such as the Prix de Lausanne offers potential to grow the social capital and prominence of Chinese training schools. In investing so heavily in the Beijing competition, and receiving recognition by building partnerships with other important institutions such as the Prix de Lausanne, the Chinese ballet community indicates its commitment to development and excellence in the art form in China, and shows itself to be a serious player on the world stage.

This chapter has explored the functions of competitions in the globalized practice of ballet. It illustrates the centrality of the competitions to the mobility of dancers internationally, and locates the arena as a mechanism by which individual dancers, institutions, and even nations are ascribed status. Drawing on the bodily metaphor of 'somatic nationalism' introduced in chapter two, I highlight how the body of the dancer in an international competition becomes a symbol for the power and cultural sensitivity of the nation. In a state where ballet is a relatively young practice, competitions serve to highlight to a global audience the technical excellence of ballet in China. Too great a focus on competition, however, and the quality of ballet on both an individual level (with an overemphasis on technical virtuosity in performance) and on a national level (with a focus on competition at

37 Approximately $725 as of January 31, 2017.

the expense of other developments in the field) can hinder progression. International competitions are responsible for shining a light on the achievements in ballet in China, and present the potential to open the world to new centres of excellence, and encourage more reciprocal transnationalism in the field.

CHAPTER EIGHT: 8.1 Contemporary Ballet in China

In thinking about ballet as it is performed and practised in China today, using the term 'contemporary ballet', is slightly unwieldy. It is not entirely clear if there is consensus among scholars using the term whether we are discussing a (sub)genre, style, aesthetic or artistic movement, or temporal moment in ballet. This ontological uncertainty provides exciting possibilities for interpretation and analysis. We write about and teach courses in dance which define choreographers, their choreographic work, and broader stylistic and technical choices in relation to characteristics which belong to, challenge or outright reject particular socio-political, aesthetic and artistic movements. The evolution of ballet in Europe and later America, makes manifest these broader artistic movements throughout history. This heritage becomes more complex when examining ballet in parts of the world where these aesthetic and artistic movements did not occur or were characterised very differently. What emerges in this chapter is an investigation of ballet in China today, an analysis of the conceptualisation and import of the model works in the 21st century for both the audiences and the dancers who perform them. Following that, a discussion of the value of these ballets, and an exploration of the impact that the model works have had on the new ballets being created since the Reform and Opening period, highlight how the ballets made during the revolutionary period discussed in chapter five and six, have facilitated the development of a thriving genre of new uniquely Chinese ballets. This chapter attempts to show how the socio-political evolution of ballet in China documents in part two of the thesis can be seen in the present. In discussing the modern conceptualisation of *The Red Detachment of Women* as well as the work's legacy, and a more recent work, *Eight Heroines* (2015,[八女投江], I highlight ballet's contemporaneity in China at the convergence of the unique legacy of the socio-political reimagining of the form with tangible links to both the past and present in ballet in the Global North as a modern transnational practice. I argue that the vernacular expression of ballet in China might not be considered merely idiomatic, but instead its local and hybrid features promote a vision of modernity which is uniquely Chinese and cosmopolitan by its very divergence from contemporary ballet as it is characterised in the West.

Following the atrocities of the Cultural Revolution, there was an official condemnation, not only to recognise the terror and suffering of millions of the country's citizens, but also because it was the "most effective means for the Communist Party to close the book on a chapter of its history that it would rather everyone forgot." (Melvin and Cai, 2000 [online]). In the public discourse, the Revolutionary period was constructed as era of creative bankruptcy, where artistic freedom and ingenuity was suppressed in order to produce a few ideologically acceptable propaganda works which were devoid of intrinsic value. Demonstrating the belief in their artistic mediocrity, the model works were unofficially banned from theatres and television by the government.

The unofficial performance ban was eventually lifted in the late 1980s. in 1992 The National Ballet of China petitioned the Ministry of Culture to be allowed to rehearse the model works again, and in the early 90s the model works returned to the stage (Murray Yang, 2016: 4). The most successful of these revivals has been with Red Detachment. *The Red Detachment of Women* and *The White Haired Girl* continue to be performed as corner stones of the repertoire of The National Ballet of China and Shanghai Ballet. They are some of the most well-known and beloved ballets in China, and are often toured internationally and used as national showpieces. The National Ballet of China performed Red Detachment over thirty times in cities such as London, Paris and Rome on its 2003 European tour. Red Detachment was performed in China as one of the first performances at the opening of the impressive, titanium and glass egg shaped National Centre for the Performing Arts in December 2007. It was also more recently staged in 2014 as part of China Central Television's New Year's Eve Gala, which was watched by approximately 800,000,000 viewers (Sohu.com, "冯氏春晚收视率与去年持平 8 亿观众收看直播"). In the summer of 2015, the National Ballet of China performed Red Detachment at Lincoln Centre in New York City.

Although the work endures and is unfailingly popular, it is not altogether clear how to appropriately appraise its artistic worth in the modern era. In examining the work more than half a century after its production, in a completely different political climate, we need to be aware that there are many challenges. The ballets created during the Cultural Revolution are marred with the violence and suffering which occurred during the period. Can scholars discuss the works in a rational and evenhanded manner, doing justice to the

intrinsic qualities of the works and the efforts of those who created them, whilst recognizing that the creation and content are heavily entangled with the politics of the time? Perhaps it is possible to adopt a perspective that acknowledges the ideology of the time, appreciates the content and context of the works, and does not condone or support the acts of violence which occurred during the period, nor ignore the suffering of those affected by it.

Chinese scholar writing at about the model works Wang Renyan, suggests this approach might be possible,

> Naturally, this is sensitive . . . we oppose the Cultural Revolution now, so of course products from then are also criticized. But model operas were very special, and we can't just ignore them. If we say the Cultural Revolution was politics raping art, then we shouldn't still be doing this today. Criticize the Cultural Revolution, criticize Jiang Qing, but why can't we analyze model operas artistically? (in Melvin and Cai, 2000 [online])

How these ballets are characterized in the modern era – as propaganda, artifact, kitsch or legitimate art – impacts the creation of the ballets which follow them. If conceptualized as successful, then choreographic strategies and artistic features which were first innovated during the revolutionary period endure and are developed in contemporary ballets produced by ballet companies working today. German Sinologist Barbara Mittler (2008), conducted interviews with Chinese men and women of all ages and social classes in the late 90s and early 2000s. A that time she observed something of a 'Red Classics Craze' (*hongse jingdian re*, [红色经典热]). This coincides with the revivals of the model work, as well as the creation of popular state-sponsored television dramas which featured adaptions of myths and stories from the revolutionary period. As these works began to be performed again, the ballet experienced a profound reconceptualization in the discourse and popular imagination. What, following the end of the Cultural Revolution, was somewhat of an embarrassment, an artifact from the malevolent regime, became a glorious example Chinese artistic accomplishment. In discussing the Model Works with her interlocuters Mittler observers,

> not one … would condemn the Cultural Revolution propaganda outright. Many of them sang and performed for me extracts from the model works, revolutionary songs or so-called loyalty dances, with a smile, and hardly

> ever with irony, much less contempt. They would proudly show me old black and white photographs of themselves and their friends, posing in dramatic gestures. Many even argued that their most important experiences during the Cultural Revolution were these many different intellectual and cultural activities, most of which amounted to propaganda in the end. (Mittler, 2008: 468)

Mittler's reports of the enduring popularity of the model works, as well as the nostalgia for the spirit of the revolutionary period mirrors my own observations conducting fieldwork in China over four years. I was lucky to see Shanghai Ballet perform *The White Haired Girl* at the Shanghai Grand Theatre on several occasions. On my first visit I was surprised when the older women sitting in the audience around me, joined in enthusiastically with the folk singing, knowing the lyrics to all the songs. This occurred at every performance I attended, in both the stalls and the amphitheatre[38]. This audience participation demonstrates the success of the work in its goal to appeal to the masses.

Australian Sinologist, Geremie Barmé highlights the reasons for the enduring popularity of the model works, as well as the impetus for the 'Red Classics Craze of the late 1990s and early 2000s. He argues resentment of corruption in the government, the precarity and unpredictability of the country's rapid transformation created an environment in which people looked to the past with a "pro-Mao nostalgia . . . [as] the formulas of the Mao era . . . offered simple answers to complex questions: direct collective action over the painful individual decisions, reliance on the state rather than a grinding struggle for the self, national pride as opposed to self-doubt" (Barmé, 1999: 321). Rather than a blithe longing for the revolutionary era, the nostalgia was an expression of frustration and discontent with the present.

While opinions on the artistic value of the model works amongst Chinese experts in the different genres is obviously very varied, many of those I interviewed who performed in these ballets during the Cultural Revolution believed the works to be important in

38 In general, I found the Chinese ballet audiences more rambunctious than audiences I have observed in Europe or America. There is often talking and movement from the audience, but these outburst of song were unique to the productions I saw of *The White Haired Girl*, and did not occur during performances of other ballets in China demonstrating the enduring popularity and nostalgic value found in this work for the modern day audiences.

establishing an audience for ballet in China and developing a style of ballet that was relevant for China. Madam Zhao Ruheng echoed this sentiment saying, "The history of ballet in China is not long, but we have been through a lot. This history makes us who we are. We are unique. Not like the West. Chinese Red ballets tell our own stories". (Zhao, 2016: Interview).

Luo Zhang Rong, a composer who was part of the *Shajiabang* creative group pragmatically suggests that "If there wasn't a market, they [the model works] wouldn't be performed" (in Melvin and Cai, 2000). Although a healthy market appetite for the works does not necessarily reflect artistic value, it is clear that the new ballets made in China in the 21st century acknowledge the legacy of the ballets created during the revolutionary period, and contemporary ballet in China sits at the convergence of these uniquely Chinese ballets, Western classical ballet and contemporary ballet as it has been conceptualised all over the world.

8.2 Contemporary ballet as Homogenizing Force

If we consider contemporary ballet, as British choreographer Christopher Wheeldon suggests, to be 'any ballet choreography made today' (in Perron, 2014), then the choreography that is made in this uniquely Chinese style pioneered in the revolutionary period, using well known Chinese literary tales and hybrid dance styles is one strand of contemporary ballet which exists in China today. More so than the style of choreography that might be more typically considered contemporary ballet, danced in leotards and bare legs, featuring sky high extensions, off balance movements and elements of modern dance techniques, Chinese style ballet reflects a modernity which is uniquely Chinese. Contemporary ballet in a more general sense, is transnational by nature and global in its outlook. It adopts a cosmopolitan attitude which is fluid, plural and multicentric. It is flexible, there are no borders, no boundaries. Choreographers from all over the world, make work on dancers who are similarly transnational and diverse. As a result, culturally specific, 'local' (as opposed to global) choreography becomes parochial, antithetical to a cosmopolitan modernity. The desire therefore, to create modern, decentralised, global work, in practice often requires normative abstraction. The abstraction rejects the particular, subsumes the local and parochial. So much so, that contemporary ballet, no matter where, by whom, or for who is it produced, becomes a recognizable idiom, some

might suggest, even its own genre. This tendency towards normative abstraction in the creation of contemporary ballet is problematic. What began as a desire to resist Westerncentrism, to be global and cosmopolitan in the creation of new art, in fact reinforces monoculturalism through the normative abstraction which is required to achieve its initial aim. In the case of contemporary ballet, the monoculturalism which is reinforced is enviably the 'ethnicity' that Keali'inohomoku identified nearly fifty years ago, obscured by a discourse of acultural, cosmopolitan modernity.

As Swedish Anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (1990: 239) made clear, 'there can be no cosmopolitans without locals'. In light of this binary proposition, can we consider the Chinese style ballet innovated in the revolutionary period a vernacular (local) practice which has the potential to resist the hegemonic monoculturalism which is, to some extent, is the result of a desire for cosmopolitanism? Or perhaps the global and the local are mutually imbricated; Chinese style ballet is the localising element which emerges under the glocalization[39] of the form. With the conscious adoption, systematic revolution of ballet in China outlined in the previous chapters, along with the continuous development of Chinese style ballet to the present, I propose that Chinese ballet is a local, vernacular expression of the more hegemonic, universal form of classical ballet as practised in the Global North. This shifts the balance of power as Chinese ballet, to some extent, resists the hegemony rather than being subsumed by it in the glocalization of the form by incorporating local elements to become more palatable to the local population.

In an interview I conducted with Xin LiLi, Artistic Director of Shanghai Ballet at the company's headquarters in Shanghai in 2016, Xin spoke about a three-fold approach to the development of Shanghai Ballet specifically, but also ballet in China more generally. Xin's vision is to continue the tradition of performing Western Classics, to develop modern/contemporary ballets and build on the legacy of uniquely Chinese ballets by making new choreography based on Chinese stories in this hybrid style. "Especially with the Reform

39 The term 'glocalization' was introduced by sociologist Roland Robertson to suggest the co-presence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies in globalised products and practices. See: Robertson, Roland (2015) "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity." In *Global Modernities*, edited by Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson, 25-44, Theory, Culture & Society. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

and Opening in China we have grown into an international company. We don't only want to *inherit* [emphasis mine] classical ballet, but also perform our own contemporary Chinese stories" (Xin, 2016: Interview). The importance of developing Chinese ballets was also echoed in an interview I conducted with Madam Zhao Ruheng. Madam Zhao spoke of her desire to build a repertoire of Chinese works that speak directly to Chinese artistic legacies. "In China was have lots of good, ancient stories. We have a series of ghost stories and lots of love stories . . . In my heart, and in others, everyone has a dream to make work which combines very old classical ballet and very old Chinese stories and opera. It is important to maintain this heritage in China." (Zhao, Interview: 2016). Madam Zhao also noted that the state sponsored ballet companies in China are comprised solely of Chinese dancers who tend to have trained at two or three prestigious ballet schools. Very often a great number of these dancers have undertaken supplementary training in Chinese folk dance, Chinese classical dance and martial arts offered in the curriculum and therefore are capable of dancing these hybrid elements incorporated in the Chinese ballets to a high standard.

The development of Chinese contemporary ballets has continued to build upon the innovation begun during the revolutionary period. The repertoires of the most prestigious ballet companies in China contain many specifically Chinese ballets very often based on historical literary works or Chinese operas. Many of these have been performed outside of China, and received much critical acclaim. Examples include the National Ballet of China's *Raise the Red Lantern* (2001), *The Peony Pavilion* (2008), *The New Year Sacrifice* (1981), *Yellow River* (1999), *The Chinese New Year* (2000), and Shanghai Ballet's *The Butterfly Lovers* (2001), *A Sigh of Love* (2006), and *Echoes of Eternity* (2015).

Perhaps the most striking illustration of the legacy of the model works choreographed in the revolutionary period, and a contemporary example of the continued development of Chinese ballet, is Liaoning Ballet's *Eight Heroines* ([八女投江]2015). Entirely sponsored by the government's China National Arts Foundation, *Eight Heroines* was created to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the second Sino-Japanese war. Much like the revolutionary works that came before it, *Eight Heroines* is based on real events which have taken on mythological status and are well known to the general population. As with Red Detachment, the ballet tells the tale of ordinary female soldiers in the Manchurian Anti-

Japanese United Army during the Japanese occupation of China beginning in 1931, lasting for fourteen years. The young women were united by their patriotism and common hatred for the Japanese invaders. In 1938, over 100,000 Japanese invaders sieged the regiments base and the female soldiers were forced to move westwards leaving their families and homes. They endured hunger and exhaustion on the march with many of their comrades losing their lives, but the women's faith in their ability to overthrow their oppressors never wavered. While the regiment was being transferred, they encountered their Japanese enemies. To protect their comrades, the eight women drew fire. They fought until their supplies were exhausted, then, rather than surrender, the women broke their guns and martyred themselves, jumping into the Wushihun river. These ordinary women made the ultimate sacrifice to save their comrades. The youngest of the women was thirteen years old and the eldest a mere twenty-three. They are remembered as heroines, symbols of Chinese resistance to Japanese oppression.

The aims of the original model works were to revolutionise art making it meaningful for ordinary citizens while at the same time to promote socialist themes and awaken class consciousness. The dancers and creative team were engaged in important revolutionary work. While the aims of *Eight Heroines* are less overtly political, the ballet strives to encourage patriotic feeling and awaken the collective memories of Chinese strength and power in the face of oppression. It also serves to educate younger Chinese, those born into the new Open and Reform era China, who, due to rapid economic growth, technological development and a more global outlook, live very different lives than their parents and grandparents.

While the government sponsors the creation of many ballets in the large ballet companies (the large ballet companies in China are to a greater or lesser extent state funded), *Eight Heroines* is a unique case because of the tendering process that was undertaken in the creation of the work. China's National Art Foundation invited tenders from ballet companies who would be interested in creating a ballet based on the story of the eight female soldiers. Liaoning Ballet, from northeast of China, was chosen to create the ballet. Liaoning was one of the areas first occupied by the CCP in the 1940s and was the location of much early revolutionary dance creation. It is also the real homeland of the eponymous women in the

Manchurian Anti-Japanese United Army featured in the ballet. The governmental involvement in the selection of the story and funding the work mirrors the close involvement of the government, in particular Jiang Qing's personal interest, in the creation of the revolutionary ballets. This use of classical ballet to promote nationalist themes, while not unique to China, was an important factor in creation of a style of ballet which is uniquely Chinese and continues to be present in the work made in this style.

There are many processional, thematic, stylistic similarities and intertextual references to the ballets created during the revolutionary period, and as such, *Eight Heroines* builds on the successes of the Chinese innovations in ballet made in that era. It also draws on the feelings the revolutionary ballets inspired in audiences. Much like during the creative development of Red Detachment, the director Qu Zijiao, choreographers Wang Yong and Chen Hui-fen, along with other members of the creative team, went to Heilongjiang's Mudanjiang city to the site of the women's sacrifice during the development of *Eight Heroines.* This replicates Mao's instruction at the Yan'an forum some seventy years earlier that artist must live side by side with the labouring audiences to fully understand their struggles and everyday experience.

Eight Heroines also continues the legacy of incorporating difference styles of Chinese dance and movement practices with classical ballet, drawing on the expertise of many diverse practitioners in the creation of new work. Wang Yong, an established ballet choreographer joined forces with Chen Hui-fen who comes from a Chinese classical dance background to create the choreography. This mirrors other Chinese ballets such as *Raise the Red Lantern* in which the creative team included film director Zhang Yimou, ballet choreographer Xinpeng Wang, and Chinese classical and modern dance choreographer Wang Yuanyuan. This emphasis on collective authorship, the rejection of the singular auteur replaced by the collective production of art by and for the masses, was central to the model works created during the Cultural Revolution and has continued to be a feature of some Chinese style ballets to the present. This stands in stark opposition to most choreography created in the Global North which tends to be have a sole choreographer, and is a realization of a singular artistic vision. There is value awarded for the creation of an identifiably unique 'choreographic voice' on the part of the individual.

The movement vocabulary in *Eight Heroines* builds on the hybrid form seen in other Chinese ballets. As in Red Detachment, *Eight Heroines*, makes use of the 'frozen poses' (*liang xiang* [亮相]) convention from Chinese opera. As the ballet opens, the eight heroines standing tall and proud centre stage, look directly at the audience with unwavering eyes. The tight group of dancers, with small concessions to individualism highlighting each woman's distinctive personality and contribution to the unit, is reminiscent of the social realist iconography found on the bas reliefs on the 'Monument of the People's Heroes' found in Tiananmen Square, Beijing. These 'frozen poses' are a recurring motif in the ballet, and is the enduring image as the women are subsumed into the Wushihun river at the ballet's conclusion.

There are also many elements from Chinese martial arts and Chinese classical dance in *Eight Heroines* which contribute the development of Chinese ballet. In the in introductory scene and throughout the second act, the soldiers advance using the *gong jian bu* [弓箭步], a 'bow and arrow' stance used in archery and a fundamental pose of northern *gong fu* martial arts, and a step found in Chinese classical dance. In the first act, there is a male group dance in which the dancers perform the impressive *shuang fei yan* [双飞燕], literally translated as 'flying swallows', a flying split leap from Chinese classical dance used to portray the men's power and virility. Later in the same act, one of the soldiers, Li Huizhen, tells her friends about catching and killing a wild boar. She performs the *xuan zhuan pian tui* [旋转蹁腿], a technically challenging rotational leg kick which depicts her strength and bravery.

Much as the Li minority folk dance used in Red Detachment, *Eight Heroines* makes use of balleticised versions of minority folk dances. There are dances using north east China's *DongBei yangge*, folk dance and music from the DongBei region, and ChaoXian minority folk dance, the dance of the Chinese Korean minority population scattered around Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning. These give geographical context, and local colour and variety to the ballet, and play a central role in indigenizing classical ballet in China. In the first act, soldier Wang Huimin and her father Wang Piao dance a *dongbei yangge* duet where they perform *shi zi bu*, *dian bu*, and *shou juan hua* movements with some elements of classical styling such as an upright posture, and use of pointe shoes. Wang Huimin dances an elemental *dongbei yangge* step, holding two red – the colour of the socialist revolution- traditional

handkerchiefs in her hands, tilting her head right and left. This is coupled with *emboité sur la pointes* moving downstage. Professors of Chinese cultural history Chang-tai Hung (2005), notes how during the Yan'an era, the Chinese Communist Party used *yangge* music and dance an ideological tool and to disseminate socialist images. The CCP staged three major *yangge* musicals weaving the party's history into a coherent success story and promoting the Party's wise leadership and support of the everyday people, the heroism of the Red Army, and the country's bright future. Simple forms of *yangge* song and dance were introduced to major cities via university folk dance groups and pamphlets, for amateurs to partake in. The movements were joyful and exuberant, and the simplified version, easy enough for mass participation in the dances, promoted the successes of the CCP. The use of *dongbei yangge*, danced with red handkerchiefs in *Eight Heroines,* provides tangible intertextual links to the ideology of the revolutionary era and the use of dance for propaganda to promote socialist ideas.

When the modern dancer represents the heroines on stage, she embodies the virtuous qualities of strength and morality found in the Maoist era revolutionary heroes alongside the technical virtuosity cultivated through rigorous dance training. She embodies yet mediates the qualities of the Maoist body and somatic nationalism through post Mao era physicality and technical training. In her ability to demonstrate near superhuman feats of strength, precision, deftness and flexibility she makes manifest the idealised notions of the extraordinary abilities of Maoist revolutionaries, and transcends the normal capacity of the human body. Thus her performance is twice the embodiment of revolutionary heroism; in her physical virtuosity and in her depiction of the heroine in the ballet.

Writing about the model works created in the revolutionary period, Clare Eng (2009: 35) suggests that when assessing artistic value, politically explicit works of art are often critiqued for their lack of complexity. Their ability to clearly communicate seems to be an impediment to their being considered high art, instead communicative directness and simplicity, are rendered as a characteristic of art of little value, or the domain of popular culture. The original model works were indeed popular and were made explicit for the masses. This is not a failing of the work, it was highly intentional. Simplicity in the ballets was not a consequence of a lack of creativity or naiveté in China, but instead a desire to

create an exemplary work of Chinese Communist art. The deliberate use of distinctly Chinese qualities in the ballets enabled an indigenizing of form which in so doing created something new. An appropriation of the Western form was simultaneous with a rejection of the Western and Chinese qualities considered disagreeable in artistic practice, and these elements were combined so that new art could develop. While creating something new does not unconditionally confer value, the ballets are not automatically good works of art, it does suggest that the criteria against which new art is held also needs to be reconsidered. If we conceived of *The Red Detachment of Women* and *The White Haired Girl* as works of art, ballets in the Western paradigm, then they are perhaps left wanting. However, the issue might not be with the ballet, but with the criteria used to judge the work. The same is true of contemporary ballets created in 21st century China. If our understanding of contemporary ballet is situated within a Western artistic paradigm, against a backdrop of Western aesthetic movements, then ballets such as *Eight Heroines* seem like relics of another era. However, by broadening our conception of contemporary ballet and appreciating the genre's potential for cosmopolitan plurality, then we allow for new art to emerge and enrich the field.

Eight Heroines is an important work for illustrating the continued success of the indigenization of ballet in China. In 2016 it won the prestigious *Wenhua* Prize, the most prestigious award for professional arts given out by the Ministry of Culture. The success of local or vernacular expression of classical ballet in China highlights that the innovations in classical ballet in China during the Cultural Revolutions have been built upon and are still relevant and evolving in the contemporary period. They make manifest the embodiment of a unique socio-cultural political legacy of ballet in China in the modern era. Unique Chinese ballets, to some extent, challenge the hegemonic 'ethnicity' of Western classical ballet, using elements of classical ballet while promoting local culture and values. This chapter has shown that the vernacular expression of the form in China sits at the convergence of both Chinese and Western values, the traditional and the modern, and as such is highly contemporary and cosmopolitan in nature.

Conclusion

A primary aim of this dissertation was to create an ethnography of ballet in China beginning with its conscious adoption in the early twentieth century to the present day in order to survey the mechanisms by which the genre has been mediated through the socio-cultural political environment. In order to do this, I explored both the multifaceted structures and institutions constituted by numerous and diverse philosophies, discourses, and political policies through and by which ballet is constructed, as well investigating the individuals who practice within these structures, to shine a light on their embodied experiences. I highlighted the ways in which bodies are cultivated and manipulated through culture, and illustrated how those bodies are both personal and symbolic. I suggested the body of the dancer is itself structured by the macro culture of the society at large, and the micro culture of the specific field of practice. At the same time, the body is generative- it structures and constitutes the culture through practice- in an inextricable mutually informing process. While this project was broad in its temporal span and ambitious in its disciplinary and methodological scope, I endeavoured to keep the focus on a specific individual, that of the ballet dancer in China. I show how these processes of construction were made manifest on real people by telling the stories of individual dancers in China to reveal the complexity and nuance of the body engaged in a cultural and artistic practice which reflects and generates socio-political production.

In order to fully realise the examination of the body at the heart of this project, the thesis needed to lay the theoretical ground work for the analysis of China by exploring the scholarly contributions made to the body project in sociology, and those with a specific interest in dance, ballet particularly. The first part of this project, chapters one and two, compared different ways in which the body has been theorised in both Western academia and in Chinese philosophy. Chapter one outlined various conceptions of the body as described by Western scholarship. Centred on the social constructionist paradigm, and principally exploring the work of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, I suggested how this scholarship can be used to consider the body as an unfinished entity, one which is shaped, constructed and invested in by society. It discussed how social forces or power is exerted and invested in the body showing the body as a receptor of social meaning. These theoretical underpinnings were later reintroduced through an analysis of the construction of

the body adopting these frameworks and applying them in different contexts in China throughout the thesis. This was explored most notably in the manipulation of the dancers' bodies as tools for Maoist ideology during the Cultural Revolution explored in chapter four, and in the processes inflicted on the body during the creation of classical dancers through training outlined in chapter six.

This project made use of the key Bourdieusian ideas of habitus, capital and field, to explore symbolic power at the individual level. Bourdieu's work is also useful to connect individual response as appropriate within specific fields, and as such, we can establish the symbolic capital in the field of ballet and specifically the Chinese ballet arena discussed in this thesis. Bourdieu's central concern in his analysis of power was diffused symbolic power, which, he claimed, is present in all social relations, is possessed, enacted and used as an instrument of domination between individual and groups. Professor of Sociology Richard Jenkins (1992) argued that Bourdieu's analysis of how power operates at the institutional level; how institutions are run and controlled, is weaker than his discussion of how power is mediated through capital at the level of individuals. Jenkins argues Bourdieu's analysis is less clear about how specific fields create a superstructure (ibid). As such, the work of Foucault was useful to bridge this gap and make sense of power operating at the institutional level.

In contrast to Bourdieu, Foucault's writing emphasised not the relationship between groups in terms of legitimate power and domination, but rather demonstrated how power functions in the institutions that constitute society. Therefore, instead of centring his analysis on motivation or interests of individuals or groups to explore domination and societal stratification as Bourdieu did, Foucault highlighted the mechanics (or technologies) of power (Foucault, 1986: 58). This project made use of this focus on institution to link the practice of ballet in terms of training and performance, and its bodily experience, to the broader structures and institutions that make this possible. It clearly links the individual dancer to the training institution, the government sponsored ballet companies and more generally to the political policy that had ramifications for ballet specifically.

In using both the theories of Foucault and Bourdieu, I hoped to illuminate the different properties and characteristics of the dancer's bodily experiences in relation to the social

world in which they operate. I hoped that these analyses of real embodied experiences aided in animating the theoretical thinking, while at the same time illuminated how these theories are useful to describe processes which are very often unclear to the individual actor, obscured at the structural level by more micro level demands on attention. The theoretical discussions also serve to highlight one of the main problems of the social constructionist approach to the body, that is, the reduction of the body to a passive, subjugated entity being written upon, rather than a responsive agent in society. Adopting an ethnographic method and allowing the voices of dancers themselves to be present in the discussion, endeavoured to support this theoretical perspective without negating the subjectivity and experience of the dancer herself, and the materiality of her body.

The second chapter of this part, chapter two, introduces conceptions of the body which emerge from ancient Chinese philosophy as well as more modern political rhetoric found in twentieth century China. The balletic body in China sits at the convergence of traditional modes of thinking about the body from ancient Chinese Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, alongside ideas from New China, with notions about the body from the West which are embedded in the practice of ballet. The discussion highlights the body as a location for debate centred on China, which surveys the changing nature of ideology, power, social structures and cultural systems from ancient times to the founding of New China in 1949. It also acknowledges that this uniquely Chinese thinking about the body will have impacted the construction of, and can be found in, Chinese ballet as a discrete genre of practice. Chapter four and eight built upon this discussion to highlight how Chinese ballets incorporated elements from other Chinese arts practices such as opera, martial arts and folk dances. These are bodily practices structured by Chinese thinking about the body, and thus will be present, perhaps in mediated form, when they are incorporated into ballet. We could conclude, therefore, that Chinese ballet as it has been indigenized, challenges Keali'inohomoku's (1970) claim referred to in the introduction, that ballet outside of Europe and European descendants in the Americas is a "borrowed and alien form." (1970:40).

Another aim of the dissertation was to contribute to the existing English language scholarship documenting the history of the introduction and evolution of ballet to China. Although there are a few English language studies which contain some discussion of the

evolution of ballet in China, most offer a description limited to a particular time period or the contributions of a specific individual, there is no existing scholarship which offers a comprehensive overview from the late Qing dynasty to the Reform and Open era. While the overview detailed in part two of this dissertation (chapters three to six) is far from exhaustive, it allows for key developments in the form to be plotted. It establishes a shift in ballet from the initial wholesale adoption of classical ballet (in technique, training and repertoire) as it was taught and performed in the Soviet Union, to a style of ballet unique to China with its own training methods and performance repertoire. It explores the ways in which ballet was indigenized, the ideological thinking which compelled the revolution in ballet, alongside the strategies adopted to implement the revolution. These chapters detail the way in which the form has been shaped, over time, by its socio-political location, and as such speaks directly to one of the central aims of the project. Documenting the use of ballet as propaganda during the Cultural Revolution also highlights not only how ballet is shaped by culture, but also how ballet shapes the socio-cultural environment in return.

Chapter five specifically makes an argument for the one of the greatest atrocities of the twentieth century, the Cultural Revolution, being fundamental for the survival of ballet in China. The successful indigenization of ballet during the Cultural Revolution allowed new Chinese-style ballet to flourish in China when other forms of culture and history were destroyed. Networks of dancers, teachers, choreographers, and directors were established, and individuals learnt their trade. Institutions instrumental to the survival and development of ballet such as training schools and professional companies were formed. The hybridity and intertexuality seen with Chinese folk, Opera, martial arts being combined with classical ballet as it had arrived from the Soviet Union, created a new style of performance fostering a sense of innovation that was both decidedly modern and uniquely Chinese. Through the performances of the model works, classical ballet was exposed to the entire population, a great contrast from its initial adoption in China in white, largely Russian, urban enclaves. Following the Revolutionary period, a Chinese appetite for the genre was created, which was simply not present in the pre-revolutionary period. Following the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, the institutional developments in ballet were not abandoned, rather they were built upon. The great success of the choreography created during this period, both in terms of its popularity and in the innovations in terms of modes of production,

ensured these works went on to be adopted as models for the creation of new, uniquely Chinese ballets in to the Reform and Open era. Chapter eight continues the discussion of this phenomenon in the modern era with an analysis of the contemporary ballet *Eight Heroines*, and concludes that the reforms of the revolutionary era were essential for the creation of an enduring style of ballet which diverges from more mainstream forms of ballet in the contemporary era.

The third part: chapters six, seven, and eight, explore ballet in China in the modern era. It is rooted in ethnographic study to discuss the experiences of dancers in ballet today. This part of thesis attempts to connect the past with the present and makes clear how the historical evolution discussed in part two of the project has contributed to, and is manifest in the field and the bodies of the dancers today. Chapter six particularly, has the bodily experience of dancers in China at its centre and highlights how the body of the dancer is cultivated in training using various strategies which function in specific ways in relation to the social world in which they operate. This chapter focuses on some of the processes and methods involved in training dancers which are unique to China and Chinese culture, an area which, although well documented in martial arts practice, has been overlooked in the English language dance literature.

Chapters six and seven indicated some of the features of ballet in China which might be considered to hinder the progression of the field. Chapter six uncovers harmful institutional practices, some unique to China, such as the proliferation of bribery in the education system, and others, using Foucault, to identify the disciplinary technologies at place in training institutions. It also described the harmful personal practices, such as excessive dieting, and extreme and unsafe physical manipulation which are damaging to the body. It illustrates that personal practices result from the institutional ones. The overt discussion about the harmful practices in this research has the potential to provoke more open dialogues around the subjects which could shift thinking and led to the implementation of safer practices. Continuing this theme, chapter seven concludes that the rigid focus on ballet competitions might be problematic for dance students who compete, whose effort and concentration are so narrowly expended that they are unable to develop in a well-rounded manner, and problematic for those who do not compete, who are overlooked in training

situation in order to prioritise competition students. It also makes the argument for progression in Chinese ballet being more easily achieved if the most promising dancers remained in China rather than moving abroad as a result of winning international competitions. Shining a light on this particular issue from a more global perspective might illuminate the problem which is somewhat obscured to those within the field in China. Taking steps to open the Chinese ballet institution up to the global community, such as the offering scholarships to Chinese ballet schools as prizes to international competition winners identified in chapter seven, will allow the international growth and recognition in the field necessary to secure China the status it deserves as a major centre of excellence in ballet.

Chapter eight resumes the discussion exploring Chinese ballet from the perspective of locating China's position in ballet as a transnational practice. It also continued to make connections through the history of ballet in China to practice of the form in the present. Through the analysis of the modern revolutionary ballet *Eight Heroines*, I conclude that ballet's contemporaneity in China might not be considered merely idiomatic, but instead the successful indigenization of ballet with local and hybrid features unique to China promotes a realisation of modernity which is exclusively Chinese and cosmopolitan by its very divergence from contemporary ballet as it is characterised in the West. I argued that contemporary ballet, in a more general sense, should adopt a cosmopolitan, multicultural, plurality, but in fact, by its assembly through normative abstraction of the form to a particular 'contemporary' aesthetic, actually reinforces monoculturalism, a concept which is antithetical to the contemporary more broadly. Chinese contemporary ballets challenge this aesthetic and as such, offer the potential to disrupt the monoculturalism dominating the field currently.

During the six years of this project, I amassed much more data that could comfortably be included in a single thesis. This data, collected from hours of interviews and observations, encompassed several topics which are, as yet, undocumented in dance scholarship. As such, there are several other areas of discussion which could very easily grow out of the research presented in this project. Further work might be useful in exploring the official structures and political policies as well as the elements of the wider cultural of China, which means

that China cannot currently be a global centre for ballet. Dancers born outside of China are not permitted to join Chinese state sponsored ballet companies. Furthermore, the type of choreography produced and the who gets to produce it is also highly regulated, and in some cases censored by the state. Without meaningful freedom of artistic creation, China's position transnationally will always be limited. Additionally, an examination of the conditions of being a professional dancer in a state sponsored company, and the social welfare benefits being an artist in a prestigious company can provide would be an interesting postscript to the project, as it is very different from the conditions enjoyed by dancers in the Global North. One example of such a different is the ability of the company to change a dancer's household registration document or '*hukou*' [户口簿], which, assigned at the place of birth, allocates access to state provisions based on agricultural and non-agricultural residency status. This controls rights such as the permissibility of internal migration, and benefits such as where an individual and her children can access healthcare and schooling, as well as the pension options available. The implications for *hukou* registration can be life changing, and as such, this specifically Chinese implication of how ballet can shape the social world would be a ripe area for further exploration.

There are two further topics uncovered by this research project which might be of interest to the broader dance community and could be the catalyst for further research in this area. Firstly, it was identified by many of my interlocutors, including the artistic directors of prestigious companies, that China lacked skilled and experienced choreographers working in the medium of classical ballet. Many of the successful ballets created in recent years in China have been made by European or American choreographers. It was lamented by many participants that there were few well considered or experienced Chinese choreographers to make ballets telling Chinese stories. This debate about the creation of choreographers, through training or otherwise, has been prevalent in other centres of ballet in recent years. Specifically focused on a lack of female choreographers in recent years, the ideas being discussed are useful parallels for the Chinese situation which itself could potentially generate some solutions to be implemented in other contexts.

Lastly, given that in recent years there has been so much success in international competitions and Chinese trained dancers gaining employment in prestigious companies all over the world, it might seem beneficial to conduct an investigation of the training methods used to produce such high calibre dancers. A specific analysis of the syllabi used, the progression of the training techniques and different teaching methods employed in prestigious institutions could potentially offer new insights into ballet training. It might even be plausible that elements of Chinese training could be adopted by other dance schools internationally.

As the arts are increasingly devalued and financially squeezed in the UK, the potential to learn from and collaborate with China in a period where they are flourishing could be considered important. The project also highlighted a period in Chinese history where the arts, and ballet specifically, enjoyed full state support, and it is possible to see the fruits of such generous backing. Although the specific regime which made use of ballet was highly problematic, this history demonstrates that ballet has been and can continue to be employed for important social functions, can be enjoyed by a wider audience, and has the potential to achieve more than its current use in the West, as light entertainment for the elite. It reveals the unique communicative and symbolic potential of ballet which could be exploited in more locations outside of China than are currently being realised.

As doctoral research in the humanities is most often consumed within its own field in academia, there are specific outcomes derived from this research which might have particular pedagogical applicability in higher education. Although these are not direct implications of the findings of the research itself, they are useful by-products of the processes of conducting the research. In recent years, we have seen increasing numbers of Chinese students in dance enter UK institutions. While student diversity is overwhelmingly positive and enriches the environment in numerous ways, there are also challenges on the part of the student, and on the teacher and institution. This project has afforded me a detailed understanding of the specific culture of Chinese dance training, and a broader understanding of the language and culture of China more generally. This enables me as a dance educator to better predict, understand and meet the needs of my Chinese students, and adopt the most successful and transferable methods of Chinese training to employ with

all students. Moreover, it is through meaningful exposure to other cultures, and the inevitable cross-cultural comparison that results, that we are better able to understand our own situation.

As the English prima ballerina Margot Fonteyn once suggested, “Sooner or later, the focus of the ballet world will shift to mainland China if it continues its present system of ballet training, effort, and enthusiasm” (in Cheng, 2000: 258). This research is one attempt at doing as Fonteyn suggested; in describing the unique development of ballet in China, and shining a light on Chinese achievement in the form. It also offers an unparalleled opportunity to examine how both ballet as form, and the bodies of dancers, are mediated through culture in a nation building exercise the likes of which had never been seen before.

Appendices

Appendix i

List of Plates

Plate i. p. 66, Newspaper clipping, Peggy Hookham (Margot Fonteyn) as 'Dragon Sprite' in performance at Royal Society of St George, Shanghai, *The China Press,* 31/5/1931, © *The China Press*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Plate ii. p. 90, Photograph (front) taken by Marie Rambert of ballet class at the Beijing Dance School during the tour in 1957. © Rambert Dance Company, London, UK.

Plate iii. p. 90, Photograph (back) taken by Marie Rambert of ballet class at the Beijing Dance School during the tour in 1957. Photograph written on by Rambert © Rambert Dance Company, London, UK.

Plate iv. pp. 96 – 97, Timeline showing dance events in socio-political context from late Qing dynasty to the end of the Cultural Revolution. © Rowan McLelland, London, UK.

Plate v. p. 113, Photograph, Principal dancer, and first Wu Qinghua, Bai Shuxiang, learning to shoot in Datong Military Camp, Shanxi in August 1964, National Ballet of China Archives, © National Ballet of China, Beijing, China.

Plate vi. p. 113, Photograph, Taking company class in Datong Military Camp, Shanxi in August 1964, National Ballet of China Archives, © National Ballet of China, Beijing, China.

Plate vii. p.118, Screenshot, An example of a 'frozen pose' in *The Red Detachment of Women* (1970, dir. Pan Wenzhan, Fu Jie) © Beijing Film Studios, Beijing, China.

Plate viii. p. 125, Photograph, Dancers performing outside in the countryside, 1968, National Ballet of China Archives, © National Ballet of China, Beijing, China.

Plate ix. p. 132, Screenshot, An example of a *shan bang* [山膀] arm position in *The White Haired Girl* (1971, dir. Sang Hu) © Shanghai Tian Ma Film Studios, Shanghai, China.

Plate x. p. 134, Photograph, *Xiao she yan* performed with technical precision by a student at the Beijing Dance Academy, © Rowan McLelland, London, UK.

Plate xi. p. 134, Screenshot, *Xiao she yan in a modified form by Wang Dachun* in *The White Haired Girl* (1972, dir. Sang Hu) © Shanghai Tian Ma Film Studios, Shanghai, China.

Plate xii, p. 141, Photograph, *Sissone fermé en attitude* performed by Svetlana Zakharova (Bolshoi Ballet) as Kitiri in *Don Quixote,* © Damir Yusupov, 2016, Moscow, Russia

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Plate xiv. p. 162, Photograph, A student at the Shanghai Dance School stretching during morning drills, June 2016, © Rowan McLelland, London, UK.

Plate xx. p. 170, Screenshot, WeChat 19/7/18 reproduced with permission from both parties (names redacted)). © Rowan McLelland, London, UK.

Appendix ii

Participant Consent forms in English and Chinese. Ethical Approval Granted October 2013

English Example:

University of Roehampton London

ETHICS COMMITTEE

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project:
The Red *Corps* of the Ballet in China *Working Title

Brief Description of Research Project:
This research project aims to explore ballet in the People's Republic of China. The project focuses on professional ballet in mainland China since 1954 to the present day. The project will explore how ballet, both in training and as performed professionally, operates within the culture of China.

The research project will use a variety of methods to study culture over a period of time. The project will use a range of research techniques such as observation (of classes, rehearsals, performances and competitions, amongst others) interviews, written field-notes, video and audio recordings and movement analysis. Interviews, were possible, will be audio-recoded.

Investigator Contact Details:
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Consent Statement *(completed by participants)*:

I agree to take part in this research project, and am aware that I am free to refuse the use of recording devices and/or withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected by the use of a pseudonym in any publication of findings.

Name ……

Signature ……

Date ……

Please note: if you have concerns about any aspect of your participation and/or any other query about the project please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an

independent party please contact the Head of Department (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

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Bilingual/Chinese Example:

University of Roehampton
London

ETHICS COMMITTEE 道德委员会

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM 参与者同意书

Title of Research Project 研究项目题目:

The Red *Corps* of the Ballet in China 中国芭蕾舞发展与共产主义 *Working Title工作题目

Brief Description of Research Project 研究項目簡介:

This research project aims to explore ballet in the People's Republic of China. The project focuses on professional ballet in mainland China since 1954 to the present day. The project will explore how ballet, both in training and as performed professionally, operates within the culture of China.
本研究项目旨于探索中华人民共和国的芭蕾舞专业于一九五四年至今的发展。这项目将集中研究芭蕾舞训练及表演专业在中国文化中是如何运作的。

The research project will use a variety of methods to study culture over a period of time. The project will use a range of research techniques such as observation (of classes, rehearsals, performances and competitions, amongst others) interviews, written field-notes, video and audio recordings and movement analysis. Interviews, where possible, will be audio-recoded.
此项目将于一段指定时间内采用不同的方法作文化研究。这些方法包括观察课堂、采排、表演及比赛,野外记录,录像及录音,分析动作及舞步和进行访问。若获参与者同意,访问将被录音。

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Consent Statement *(completed by participants)*:
同意书*(由参与者填写)*：

I agree to take part in this research project, and am aware that I am free to refuse the use of recording devices and/or withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected by the use of a pseudonym in any publication of findings.

本人同意参与加是次研究项目及明白本人可制定合作界限,拒绝录像和录音及于任何时间退出。本人明白研究员对本人所提供的资料将绝对保密,并在所有报告以笔名代替本人的姓名及身份。

Name姓名…….

Signature签署 ……

Date 日期……

Please note: if you have concerns about any aspect of your participation and/or any other query about the project please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

请注意：若您对是次研究项目或参与事宜有任何查询或意见,请与研究员联络。若您希望跟独立人员联络,可联络部门负责人(若研究员是学生,您亦可联络研究总监) 。

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Appendix iii:

Conducting Fieldwork: Accessing the Field.

Anthropology as a discipline has a long-standing concern with the exploration of the unknown. When I began this project, there were several substantial 'unknowns' to navigate in order to make the research possible. The first and most considerable challenge, was that I had never been to China and did not speak any Chinese. Furthermore, I was undertaking the project on a part time basis around which I had a heavy teaching load at two higher education institutions. In order to gain a deep understanding of the field, it was necessary to spend extended time in China observing and talking to students, former and current dancers and teachers, choreographers, administrators, and those working in other important arts institutions. It was essential to watch performances, training and competitions, and have access to archival materials. In order to realise the fieldwork necessary, I needed financial support from funding bodies, alongside access to the community of people I was interested in. Therefore I applied to many organisations who had a history of funding research in China or a stated interest in doing so. I was successful in several of these applications which facilitated periods of fieldwork in China[40]. The most impactful of these awards was the opportunity granted by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) under the International Placement Scheme to work as a research fellow for six months at the Shanghai Theatre Academy (STA).

As former professional ballet dancer and current lecturer in dance, I have existing links and networks in the field of ballet. While at the outset of the project I did not directly know anyone dancing or teaching in China, I had experience teaching and working with Chinese students in both conservatoire and university settings. I initially asked these students if I could conduct preliminary interviews and they obliged. It was here that I learnt about the most prestigious companies in China and important training institutions. From this small handful of interviews, I was also able to begin to recognise patterns in the students' personal histories and recollections of training. This helped me to hone my interview technique and develop a clearer understanding of the types of questions to ask about the field. It was also my first introduction to *WeChat*, a Chinese social media and messaging app which is widely used as the primary mode of communication in China both in professional and social settings. Using this app to contact participants and to be available to them was crucial to the success of my fieldwork, as well as in everyday life in China where the app can also be used to order and pay for all manner goods and services in almost every environment.

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40 The University of Roehampton provided me with a fee waiver scholarship which meant no tuition fees were payable for the duration of my PhD. In exchange, I worked hours teaching on the undergraduate programmes in the Dance Department. Competitive funding bodies that supported the research include: The University of Manchester/East China Normal University, *Study China Programme* (2014, Chinese language tuition, accommodation, sustenance and stipend for six weeks), The Universities' China Committee in London, *UCCL Grant* (2015, £2,000), *Santander Travel and Mobility Scholarship* (2016, £1,500), The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), *International Placement Scheme* (2016, £5,000) and the British Association of Chinese Studies/Taiwan Ministry of Education, *Huayu Enrichment Scholarship* (2017, $25,000 NTD (approx. £700 [March 2019] per month for six months).

Towards the beginning of my research, I also had the good fortune to be introduced to a Chinese PhD student visiting the University of Roehampton who was conducting research in the UK. I invited the student for coffee and told him about my research. His PhD supervisor in China was Professor Ou Jian Ping, the Director and Research Fellow of Dance Research Institute at the Chinese National Academy of Arts, and perhaps the leading academic writing about classical ballet in China. This was my first contact with someone who would be considered in anthropology to be a 'key informant'.

A key informant is widely acknowledged in the anthropological literature as an expert source of information about the field. Often key informants as a result of their analytic and reflexive skills, knowledge or position in society, are able to provide richer information or deeper insight into their specific social field that other members of their community. On my first extended trip to Beijing in 2015, I met Professor Ou at a performance of the National Ballet of China at the National Centre for the Performing Arts. I told him about my PhD project and he was kind to offer to put me in contact with some of staff at the Beijing Dance Academy. I had previously emailed the Academy about my research and to ask to be allowed to observe, but with little success. With the backing of Professor Ou and a few introductory *Wechat* messages with the appropriate faculty, I was invited to observe classes over a few weeks, and conduct an interview with Dr. Zou Zhirui, the then Director of the ballet department at the Beijing Dance Academy.

There were several 'key informants' essential to facilitating the process of the research, however none was more important than Madam Zhou Ruheng. Madam Zhou was a former Principal dancer in the National Ballet of China during the Cultural Revolution, and the Director of the company from 1994 – 2009. She is regarded internationally as an expert in Chinese ballet, and is often invited to speak and judge at international competitions and festivals. I had been conducting an interview with the former ballet teacher of a students I had taught in the UK. This participant ('Yue Mei') was herself the Head of a ballet department at a prestigious university in China. She asked me if I would like to interview Madam Zhou. I jumped at the chance; 'Yue Mei' set up a meeting and I enthusiastically got on a train from Shanghai to Beijing the same afternoon to accommodate Madam Zhou's busy schedule. Madam Zhou was charming and generous with her time, very insightful and following years of telling her story to the Chinese and international media, highly reflexive and articulate about her experiences. She also acted as a gatekeeper to other important figures in the Chinese dance world, and arranged a private tour of the museum and archive at the headquarters of the National Ballet of China. At Madam Zhao's request, the company's tour manager spent many hours explaining the key archival objects and allowed me to take photographs of rare materials. I have tried to repay the generosity she and her assistants provided me with by remaining in close contact with many of her team, and offering advice, guidance and support when they have questions about the UK or higher education and arts institutions in Europe.

Another central period of fieldwork occurred between March and September 2016 for a six-month period, when I was an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Fellow in Shanghai at the Shanghai Theatre Academy (STA). STA is one of China's most prestigious and

competitive arts training conservatoires with a specialised ballet major. While at STA, I had to be fairly assertive in order to gain access to relevant activities. Once welcomed by the International Office at the university, I was left alone to set up interviews and observations on a different campus where the dance department was located on the outskirts of Shanghai. This required a fair amount of grit and perseverance, as very few members of the ballet faculty were aware of my presence as a fellow at STA. I would routinely arrive at the dance studios in the morning without an invitation to observe and wait to politely talk to any staff and students (in Chinese) I encountered. Sometimes this was fruitful, and I was able to observe, or conduct an interview, but on other occasions, I was not permitted. Being prepared to persevere with warmth, gratitude and enthusiasm rather than a sense of entitlement, meant I was eventually welcomed by the faculty and gained access to the everyday life of the institution as well as the associated secondary school, the Shanghai Dance School (SDS). I watched classes, rehearsals and performances and interviewed students, teachers and other members of the faculty. I attended all the ballet classes of several groups over a two-month period and watched them prepare for and perform their formal examinations. I also observed rehearsals for performances, and other supplementary classes such as pointe work, pas de deux, repertoire and Chinese classical dance. I grew to know these cohorts well, was able to chart their progression throughout the semester. I often socialised with the class teachers and students.

Perhaps the key ingredient to my success in gaining access to the field was one I learnt about mid-way through my project: to ask, politely and respectfully, with enthusiasm, for what I wanted. This was a somewhat difficult task for a former ballet dancer who is more used to quietly facilitating the demands of teachers, choreographers and company directors. More often than not, my participants were willing to oblige. I showed my gratitude by being accommodating, making sure I travelled to make the interview as easy as possible on the participants, being flexible in my schedule and willing to reschedule, even with little notice. I brought small, inexpensive gifts from the UK, and bought coffee and cake as appropriate.

Lastly, I also learnt to persevere despite occasional feelings of embarrassment by feeling out-of-place in social situations or unfamiliar environments. Being present in the field, consistently enthusiastically attending events and performances at every opportunity, hanging around and talking to people, facilitated a recognition amongst many in the field, that led to invitations to participate fully in a fairly short amount of time. I am now pleased to be able to call some of those who facilitated and participated in my research, friends.

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